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Dick Doom, the Artist Detective.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.



WITH RAPID, POWERFUL STROKES HE SWAM TO THE RESCUE.

Dick Doom, the Artist Detective;

OR,

HUGH HUNTINGTON'S

HIGH-HANDED GAME.

A Story of the Mystery of Surf Spray Hall.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

THE MASTER OF SURF SPRAY HALL.

UPON the coast of New Jersey, not very far from a favorite summer resort, stands a grand old stone mansion facing the sea, and so near the shore that, in wild weather, from the ocean the surf would send its showers of spray even upon the broad piazzas of the old homestead, and hence the name given it a hundred years ago of Surf Spray.

It had been built in Colonial times, and its acres then were numbered by the thousands, while its master was a man of wealth and power, the descendant of an English noble family.

Surf Spray Hall boasted of some two-score rooms, most of them of large dimensions; it had wings on either side, a large extension in the rear, vast piazzas, a tower and a cupola both commanding a grand view of the sea and inland.

But the family who had dwelt there when they numbered a score, had become scattered; death had come to some and the last of the race of Huntingtons were a father and son, who lived there in almost gloomy companionship until the youth had gone to a foreign university to be educated.

Two years after, he had come home under a shadow, for he had slain a fellow student in a duel.

Of the merits of his side of the case little was known, but for the act his father had driven him from his home, telling him never to darken his doorway again.

In vain did the youth implore his father to hear his story before he condemned; the stern man was obdurate and refused to listen to any explanation and repeated his command for his boy and heir to leave Surf Spray forever.

Thus had the young man left his home, his birthplace, and the dwelling-place of his race for generations, and had gone forth into the world with his gripsack and a hundred dollars in his pocket with which to make his fortune.

And there, in the great old mansion, in solitude and isolation, dwelt old Colonel Huntington—austere, moody, and seeking no companionship, other than the large retinue of servants he kept about him, having no amusement save his books and what pleasure his horses and dogs afforded him.

Two years passed, and not a word had been heard of the exiled son so ruthlessly driven out into the world.

Whether his boy was dead or alive, the master of Surf Spray did not know.

He welcomed no visitors, entertained no guests, and never, apparently, left his own lands. Those who pretended to know assumed that he was living the life of a recluse because of his own past, which had been an evil one and over which hung a veil of mystery.

One night old Colonel Huntington was stricken down with sudden illness, and a servant was sent hurriedly for a physician.

When the doctor came, he frankly told the master of Surf Spray that the hand of Death was upon him.

"Send to the nearest station with all speed and telegraph for my attorney to come at once, and also to my nephew, Hugh Huntington, to accompany him," was the decisive order of the stricken man.

It was the following evening before these two persons arrived, to then find the colonel failing fast; but he rallied quickly when the lawyer and his nephew arrived, and said:

"I wish to change my will.

"Write it for me, attorney, and make it so that I leave every dollar that I am worth to my son, if alive.

"If he is dead, or if he is yet living but does not return to his home within three years from to-night, then all that I have goes to my nephew here, Hugh Huntington, and I appoint him, in either case, sole executor of my estate, until my son returns, or the time specified is at an end, when Hugh is to become my heir."

The attorney wrote the will as directed, and in a bold hand the stern master of Surf Spray signed his name to it, while two of the servants were called in as witnesses.

One hour after his autograph was attached to the will, the stricken man breathed his last, and Hugh Huntington stepped in as master, in his stead, until a given time, when it would be known whether he was to be the heir, or yield up all to his cousin, the exiled son, whom many believed to be dead.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE EVE OF AN INHERITANCE.

HUGH HUNTINGTON, the executor to the estate of Colonel Huntington, and the heir to be, if the exiled son did not reappear, was a good executor to place over the Surf Spray estate, for he had shown himself an able business man and manager.

The dead master had been laid to rest in the family burying-ground with considerable pomp, and a costly marble tomb had been ordered to be placed above his remains.

This done, the executor seemed to feel that his duty to the dead was ended, for he began his management as executor by discharging all but two servants, and closing the mansion save the wing in which he made his home.

He had given up his position as a bank clerk on a modest salary, to devote his time to the care of the estate, which really demanded his entire attention, but he took for his services the same amount which he had been receiving in the bank, save that he added his own living expenses to those of the estate.

Untilled lands on the place were farmed on shares; the fancy stock was cut down, the horses sold, the kennel of hounds gotten rid of, and economy was stamped upon everything about Surf Spray, where before, all had been lavish display and extravagance.

The place was not allowed to run down, however; quite otherwise. Every thing was well kept up, all needed repairs or betterments were made; paint and whitewash were not spared and the property not only was not allowed to lose a single dollar of its value by neglect, but was made valuable by all that was done.

No visitors were entertained, however, and all who were watching the care of the place under the executor were compelled to admit that he was saving many a thousand dollars for the heir when he should return to claim his inheritance.

They noticed, too, that there was a standing advertisement in the New York *Herald*, for the heir to come home to his inheritance, and some said that the same notice was kept in a leading journal of the East, West and South, so that he was doing all in his power to find young Huntington.

After a year had passed it came out that Hugh Huntington had a special detective upon the track of the missing heir, engaging his services by the year.

But it was all to no avail. The heir did not reappear. Either the advertisements were not seen by him, or, if seen, were unheeded, while the detectives failed to find any trace of the missing master of Surf Spray.

Thus three years went by after the death

of Colonel Huntington, and in that time the estate had steadily increased in value; the stocks and bonds invested had all proven paying investments, and the executor and possible heir had the satisfaction of knowing that, under his management, the inheritance had become all of a third more valuable, as he had hoped that it would.

Upon the last day of the three years set by the old master of Surf Spray for the return of his son to claim his inheritance, Hugh Huntington was alone in the library of the grand old mansion.

The servants had retired, as was their wont, by nine o'clock, and Hugh sat at his desk figuring up his accounts.

It was an ugly night without, for the wind was off-shore and blowing a gale, and the surf fell with thundering roar upon the beach.

But the venerable stone mansion remained as firm as a rock, though the winds howled savagely and the waves pounded the sands as though to sweep them away.

A wood-fire burned cheerily in the large fireplace and cast its ruddy glow into the next room, which was Hugh's own bed-chamber, and into which he cast a longing glance now and then, as though anxious to go to his rest.

"No; not yet will I retire, for when I do so it will be after midnight, when I can sink to sleep with the knowledge that I am the heir of Surf Spray, and all that it implies.

"Yes, at twelve o'clock I will be master of Surf Spray.

"I have waited long; I have done my whole duty, and now I am on the eve of a fortune that will make me a millionaire," and he rubbed his hands gleefully while his eyes sparkled with delight.

The executor was a young man, not yet thirty years of age, well formed, and yet ill-favored in countenance.

Leaning back in his easy-chair, as he placed his pen behind his ear and clasped his hands contentedly, he continued:

"Yes; I have saved up just three thousand dollars of my own money, which, with what I have laid aside, gives me a bank account of five thousand—not so bad, even if the heir should come to-night, which now seems quite impossible.

"As to the estate, it is worth over a million, for I have almost doubled its value, and every investment is gilt-edge and safe.

"Then, too, the summer resort, on the coast, is becoming popular, and that will treble, yes, quadruple the value of the Surf Spray lands, and there are fully fifteen hundred acres that can be cut up into villa sites and sold at high prices.

"Yes, I will be several times a millionaire, and—Surf Spray is mine in just ten minutes more!"

And as he spoke the hall door opened and into the room stepped the lost heir to Surf Spray Hall!

CHAPTER III.

THE HEIRESS OF RIVERSIDE REST.

NOT many miles from Surf Spray Hall, and back upon the beautiful North Shrewsbury River, was the fine old home of Farmer Enoch Marsden.

The residence overlooked the river, and commanded a view of the beautiful scenery all around it, and there, in Riverside Rest, had dwelt Enoch Marsden since his boyhood.

He was a "gentleman farmer," and enjoyed life greatly;—in fact, to such a degree of extravagance that he lived beyond his means, and each year added a few thousands of mortgage to his estate to pay his debts.

He kept his blooded horses, his yacht, gave dinners to his many friends, belonged to several clubs in New York, and enjoyed all there was in life for a man of his extravagant tastes and *bon vivant* proclivities.

When a man, nearing the thirties, he had

married a widow, who had a young son, and for several years they had seemed to live a happy life.

Then there came a scandal in the neighborhood, for Mrs. Marsden had suddenly left the elegant home of her husband, taking her son with her, and had gone to dwell at a pretty cottage down upon the Highlands of Never-sink.

Soon after it was reported that she had secured a divorce from Enoch Marsden, and within the year she had married again—married a handsome man several years her senior, but a stranger to all in the neighborhood.

Where the blame lay, who was wrong, Enoch Marsden or his wife, no one knew, or could guess, for Marsden, himself, never spoke of her even to his most intimate friends.

Just after her remarriage, however, he left home on a journey and was gone for several months. Then returning, he brought a young and beautiful wife with him.

This wife also had been a widow, and had a child, a lovable little girl of three years at the time of her mother's marriage to Marsden, and the little one so won the heart of her step-father that, in addition to his relationship to her, he legally adopted her as his heiress, and seemed never happier than when she was in his company, riding, driving, sailing, or at home.

A few years of perfect happiness thus went by; then another shadow fell upon the master of Riverside Rest, for his beautiful wife was drowned one day by the capsizing of the yacht while sailing with her husband and daughter.

Mrs. Marsden was swept away by the rough waters ere she could be rescued, and her body was never found, but her daughter was saved by Marsden, after a desperate struggle for life himself.

It was a bitter blow to fall upon the husband and daughter, and for a long while they seemed crushed by it.

But the young girl, by the advice of the family physician, was sent off to boarding-school; and, left alone in his life at Riverside Rest, Enoch Marsden began to enter upon his very extravagant mode of living which ate up the money he had at interest in banks, and, by the time his daughter reached the age of sixteen, he had begun to help out his extravagances by heavy incumbrances upon his property.

It was while Myrtle Marsden was at home spending vacation, when she was in her sixteenth year, that two important happenings came to her young life.

One was her being saved from drowning in the surf by a youth who risked his own life to rescue her, and then modestly glided away to avoid thanks.

That youth was none other than Bert Manning, the son of Enoch Marsden's divorced wife!

Two weeks after her rescue from drowning, while riding on horseback with her father, Myrtle's horse became frightened, the bit broke and the animal dashed madly away toward the crowded beach-drive at the summer resort not far from Surf Spray Hall, for their ride had extended in that direction.

When all expected to see the young girl killed, a horseman suddenly wheeled out of the crowd, drove the spurs into his horse's flanks, and, in a moment, was alongside of her. Then, leaning over, with his strong right arm he raised Myrtle from her saddle, and, halting his horse, he placed her gently upon the sidewalk, amid the cheers of all who witnessed his bold and skillful act.

That horseman was the young son whom old Neil Huntington, the master of Surf Spray, had exiled from his home on account of his fatal duel abroad.

Thus it was that Myrtle Marsden met Bert Manning, who saved her life, and afterward

became her devoted admirer, until his step-father, whose name he had taken, failing in business, Bert had left his home to seek a fortune in the far West, leaving at the same time when Hazel Huntington had been driven out into the world by his unforgiving father.

The two youths being firm friends, they had linked their fortunes and sought to find riches in the gold mines of the Wild West.

How Bert Manning fell sick and had died there, and, in digging the grave for his comrade, how Hazel Huntington had struck it rich in a true gold find, ought to be a part of this eventful and very strange story; but—thereby springs the mystery of a terrible tragedy and most daring imposture, which only the subtle art and entire devotion of a great detective was destined to bring into the sunlight of a startling exposure.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VAGABOND HEIR.

WHEN Hugh Huntington beheld the form before him of the heir of Surf Spray, his heart seemed to cease its pulsation, his eyes stared wildly at him, as though at an apparition, and he could not rise from his chair.

The one who entered the room was dressed more like a tramp than one who had a big fortune in his grasp.

He was a young man with unkempt hair and a beard of some weeks' growth, shabby clothes, worn shoes and a tattered hat.

He had the appearance of one who had been ill, and was yet weak and suffering.

Hugh Huntington saw him come forward and drop into a chair with a sigh of relief as though glad to find a place in which to rest.

Not a word did he utter; only he turned a wistful gaze upon the man who, a moment before, had thought himself master of Surf Spray Hall and the fortune that went with it.

Rallying, at last, Hugh Huntington asked sternly:

"Who are you, sir, that dares intrude into this house at midnight?"

"One who came for a purpose," was the reply.

"To rob me, I suppose. But, be warned, for I am fully armed from fear of just such as you."

"I am not a robber, but one who comes to claim my own."

"How did you get into this house?"

"With my own pass-key, which in years of adversity and exile I have clung to."

"Who are you?"

"You well enough know, Hugh!"

"I do not, you are a stranger to me."

"Why, you spoke my name when I entered."

"It was your resemblance to Hazel Huntington, that was all."

"Yes, I should resemble Hazel Huntington, for I am he."

"You are not!"

"I am Hazel Huntington, the heir to Surf Spray."

"I say that you are not."

"Prove that I am not!"

"I can do so."

"How?"

"Hazel Huntington went West with Bert Manning, a comrade, and the latter died in the mining country of Arizona, while his comrade was almost immediately thereafter killed in some mysterious way."

"I was not killed, for I am Hazel Huntington."

"Now you must prove this."

"Great God! I cannot," was the unexpected and sudden response of the man.

"I thought so, for when one is alive it is sometimes hard to prove his identity, and particularly so for a dead man to prove that he is alive," was the sneering rejoinder of Hugh.

"See here, Hugh Huntington! let me tell you that I know exactly how reads my father's will; that there were witnesses to it in two servants who were present, and the physician who attended him."

"Feeling that he had wronged me, his will left me everything, in case I returned home within three years from the date of his death, and you were made executor."

"Now the three years are not quite up yet."

"I say they are! Look at that clock," and Hugh Huntington pointed to a clock in the library.

"Yes, I see; that says it is now half-past twelve."

"True, and you have been here not ten minutes."

"The clock is wrong."

"Then note the time by my watch."

"That gives the same hour, yet it, also, is wrong."

"Do you note in my bedroom there another clock?"

"Yes."

"What is the hour by that?"

"The same as the others."

"It is not possible for the three to be wrong."

"Unless you set them all ahead a half an hour."

"Do you believe I would do an act so vile?"

"I neither know good nor bad of you, but, when there is a fortune at stake few men could resist the temptation to sin."

"I could, and I live up to the letter of the law in all things."

"Yet you are not just."

"I am."

"Prove it!"

"Well, I have waited three years, and I have cared for this estate, almost doubling it in value."

"At midnight of the third year, I was to inherit all, and I have waited for an exiled son, an heir discarded, until, on his death-bed, Colonel Huntington decided to pass away in peace and so left you all, if you indeed are Hazel Huntington, with the proviso that you should return within a specified time."

"I have had a detective on your track for three years, in search of you, if you are Hazel Huntington, and I have, in that time, advertised in five of the leading papers of the country, telling you to come forward and get your fortune."

"I have found no trace of you, heard nothing more of you than what was sent by a miner from the West, who found you dead by the body of your friend, Bert Manning."

"He wrote home, from papers found on your body, and Bert Manning's, that you were dead, always providing that you are Hazel Huntington, which I now emphatically deny."

"Now accuse me of injustice, or bad faith when I now claim that which is my own, by law!"

CHAPTER V.

A MISTAKE IN DATES.

THE vagabond heir of Surf Spray listened attentively to all that Hugh Huntington had to say.

He did not break in upon his statement nor question his assertions, and when he had finished, looking like a man who had right on his side and had irrevocably clinched an argument, the vagabond, looking wan and weary, sat in apparently deep and worrying meditation.

As he did not speak, Hugh Huntington at last said:

"Well, you see my argument, sir?"

"You do not believe that I am Hazel Huntington, your cousin?"

"Yes, that is it. I do not believe it."

"You knew me as a boy?"

"Oh, yes; met you from time to time, yet

we were never intimate, for when I visited my uncle, Colonel Huntington, you were generally away, and I suppose you have not forgotten, were abroad at the university for some time."

"I have not forgotten the fact, sir."

"Well, though I see a resemblance to my young cousin, I admit with all frankness, I cannot swear that you are Hazel Huntington, and under oath, in fact, would say that you were not."

"So you see just how I stand, and you, being dead before the law, and not coming in the given time for your inheritance, cannot secure it. Do you see?"

"Suppose I prove that I am Hazel Huntington, what then?"

"That makes no difference in the case—cuts no figure really, as the time was up at midnight, and I am now the heir and in possession."

"You seem to have wholly overlooked one important fact."

"Ah! what is that?"

"When was the will of my father dated?"

"What does that matter?"

"Will you give me the date?"

"Oh, yes; it was dated on the seventeenth of November."

"And what date was it that my father died?"

"On the seventeenth of November just three years ago."

"You are mistaken."

"What?"

"My father died on the eighteenth of November."

"That cannot be possible," and the face of Hugh Huntington turned pale.

"It is possible and true, for the eighteenth is the date on his tombstone, and—"

"A mistake of the stone-cutter, then."

"No mistake at all, but the correct date; besides, the physician gave the eighteenth, for here is his certificate of death, and here is the New York *Herald* and the Long Branch *News*, and they both give the same date as the day of his death, and it was on Friday, and Sunday the twentieth he was buried."

"Well, it does look so," said the executor, after looking over the certificate and the papers.

"It is so."

"Then I merely made a mistake of a day, for the will is dated the eighteenth, I suppose."

"No, it is dated the seventeenth."

"And to-day is the night of the seventeenth of November, three years after, and you lose your inheritance, it being after midnight."

To the surprise of the executor the claimant to a fortune laughed, while he said:

"You do not seem to have read the will very closely."

"Oh yes, I have."

"But overlooked the date, and some of its wording."

"How so?"

"The lawyer who drew up the will made the mistake in the date."

"Well?"

"But there appears in the will this wording:

"'Until three years from this date, the day of my death, shall my son Hazel be allowed to return and claim his inheritance, and not doing so by midnight of this date, three years after the day of my death, then all shall go to my beloved nephew, Hugh Huntington, without reserve.'"

Hugh Huntington became very pale, as, from a slip of paper in his hand, the claimant read these words from the will of Colonel Huntington; he seemed at a loss what to say, and a silence of full a minute ensued.

"You have heard?"

"Yes."

"You admit what I read to be the correct wording of my father's will?"

"I admit the correct wording of the will, yes."

"Well, you must admit, then, that, my father dying on the eighteenth gives twenty-four hours longer for me in which to claim my fortune."

"There may be some mistake."

"You have all day to-morrow to look for any mistake as to the date of the will on the seventeenth, the death of my father on the eighteenth, and the correct wording of the will."

"And you have all day to-morrow to prove that you are Hazel Huntington, the heir to Surf Spray Hall and its attendant fortune," was the stern response of the executor.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COMPROMISE.

THE last words of Hugh Huntington brought a strange expression over the face of the claimant for the Surf Spray millions.

What that expression was, Hugh Huntington seemed to quickly read as one of doubt as to his power to prove himself to be the heir, and he added sharply:

"Yes, you left home, all the time giving you the benefit of the doubt as to your identity, when you were a youth of twenty, I believe, or thereabouts."

"You were exiled by your father, for some reason best known to himself, and which he kept secret from even his attorney and myself."

"You were driven out into the world penniless, or with only some clothing, which you took with you, and a little money."

"There went with you a wild young fellow by the name of Bert Manning, one whose extravagant ways had impoverished his parents, and who was said to be your rival for the hand of Enoch Marsden's daughter, as you both loved her."

"But, rivals as you were, you went together as comrades to the Wild West."

"Now, saying that you are Hazel Huntington, your friend, yes, and your rival, died there under mysterious circumstances, and though you were reported killed, you now come here, five years after your departure from home, to claim the fortune of Colonel Huntington."

"You bring no proof of your identity, come at the very last moment, and hope to frighten me into turning over to you the large fortune in my keeping, and which is to be mine to-morrow night, if you are right according to dates, and I believe that you are."

"Now, sir, I look upon you as an arrant impostor, and, believing Hazel Huntington to be in his grave, I say to you to bring full proof of what you claim to be, for within twenty-four hours I will be master here if you do not."

Like a statue sat the claimant, listening to every word uttered by the executor, his thoughts busy the while.

When the other had ceased speaking, he said in a low tone:

"Do you not recognize me as Hazel Huntington?"

"Upon my honor, no!"

"Perhaps the servants may."

"Their simple recognition would do no good; but you shall have the chance to try to-morrow."

"Miss Myrtle Marsden might do so."

"She might, or might not, what then?"

"And her father?"

"Granted."

"Would not these recognitions be sufficient?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Well, I happen to have come across a distinguishing mark upon Hazel Huntington, spoken of in a letter written by Colonel Huntington to my father, in speaking of his young son, and commenting upon it."

"What is it?"

"Have you any distinguishing birth-mark upon you, may I ask?"

"I do not know that I have."

"Very well, I shall place this letter in evidence that you are an impostor, unless you show the birth-mark I have referred to, and, as you will not be able to prove your identity before midnight to-morrow night, then, even by your dates, the fortune is mine."

"And you will take it?"

"Of course, though I wish to be generous."

"What do you call being generous?"

"If I have, after you give in your proofs to-morrow, any reason to feel that there may be a shadow of a doubt as to your identity, I will not see you suffer, but risk your being an impostor, and so give you the sum I have saved up of my own money, to have in case the heir did appear and I had to go forth in the world."

"And what was that sum?"

"Say, five thousand dollars; but I must have a doubt in my mind, remember, after having seen your proofs, before I give you that."

Again the claimant sat silent for a minute, and at last, as his face brightened up he said:

"See here, Hugh Huntington, if I went to law I could get my own, there is no doubt of that; but it would be a long and tedious trial, perhaps, and the lawyers would get a good deal for their work."

"Yes."

"Now I want money, and I need it very much."

"I know that this estate runs considerably over a million in value, and you wish to get possession of it."

"If I prove my identity you get nothing, so I offer a compromise."

"What is it?"

"Give me checks for one hundred thousand dollars and I'll go my way, never to come near you again, leaving you in full possession of all you inherit after twelve o'clock to-morrow night."

"I'll do it!" was the quick and eager response of the executor, and from the expression that rested upon his face it looked as though he was convinced in his own mind that the real heir to Surf Spray was before him.

CHAPTER VII.

SELLING HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

THE eagerness with which the claimant saw Hugh Huntington accept his offer of compromise, caused a look of disappointment to cross his face as though he felt deep regret at not having named a larger sum.

But he said in answer to the acceptance of his proposition:

"I look at it just in this way, that my father might have disinherited me, and even not doing so, if I had arrived to-morrow night, I would have lost all."

"That is true."

"Then again, to a man who has been a beggar, a tramp, one-fifteenth of the fortune I will get is a big sum."

"It surely is."

"Therefore I say I will take checks for one hundred thousand dollars, in place of all my claims."

"You are wise."

"So I will need no proof, as you are well convinced of who I am, and we will not have to go to law about it."

"You say just what is right, and I will give you the checks, making each one for ten thousand dollars on New York and Philadelphia banks, for I am too wise to carry all my eggs to market in one basket, as that is to risk all by a bank failure."

"You are wise, indeed, Cousin Hugh."

"Now, how shall I make these payable?"

"To Hazel Huntington of course, and

more, I will indorse them, and you can then indorse my signature as correct, so I will have no trouble in getting the money, as I might otherwise have."

"Yes, bank cashiers are not wont to pay checks to tramps."

"True, but my signature, by the way, should show that I am Hazel Huntington, for my letters to my father must be in your possession."

"They are; but I am taking your word for it, you see?"

"And you must give me a hundred in money so as to fit myself up and be presentable."

"All right; I will; and you can stop all night, for I have a room I can put you in, and I'll fit you up in some of my clothing in the morning so the servants will not wonder at my entertaining a tramp."

"They need not know that you are Hazel Huntington, you know."

"There is no need of it."

"But, do you mean that you will entertain all night such a beggar as I am?"

"You will not be a beggar, as you will be worth quite a fortune."

"But my vagabond appearance!"

"There is a bath-room adjoining the chamber in which you sleep, I will place clean clothes for you, soap will make you look passably well, and a comb and brush will add to the beauty of your flowing locks, while your attire you can bundle up and carry away with you."

"Oh, yes, I am really anxious to entertain you."

"Thanks. I'll accept of your hospitality, for it is blowing a gale outside and is very cold."

"Now, write me the checks, please."

Hugh Huntington turned to his desk, and unlocking a secret drawer, took from it a number of check-books of different banks.

He sat down there at his desk and wrote, one after the other, a check for ten thousand dollars, payable to Hazel Huntington.

The claimant stood there watching him until he had written the last one.

"Now, indorse these, please."

The claimant took the pen, and in a bold hand wrote his name. The signature was closely scrutinized by the executor of Surf Spray, who then wrote beneath it the words, followed by his own name:

"Signature correct."

"HUGH HUNTINGTON,

"Executor Surf Spray Estate."

"That is all satisfactory, Cousin Hugh, and, as I am really fatigued, I will ask you to show me to my room, and not forget the clean clothes you promised."

"I will do so, and I am sorry not to give you a room with fire in it, and near my own, for there is only one I keep prepared for any guest who might drop in and that is in the other wing."

"It matters not where it is, to one who has been glad to sleep in a cow-shed, stable, or sheep-pen."

"But my days of want and suffering are over."

"Yes, I feel that they are, with the fortune that you have; but, remember, you need never come near me again for another dollar."

"You would not give it me?"

"Not a dollar, for I have done all that I intend to do for you."

"I shall not ask for more, rest assured, and with this start I may one day equal your fortune," and the young man followed the executor to the room where he was to remain all night, and which seemed a long way off in that large old mansion with its halls and many rooms.

Having given him a lamp he returned for clothing for him, and the heir who had sacrificed his fortune stood alone in the large, gloomy room, looking about him with a

strange expression upon his face, while in one hand he clutched tightly the checks for which he had sold his inheritance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HEIR'S RESOLVE.

It was late when Hugh Huntington arose the next morning, and breakfast had been waiting for some time, so the servant who cared for his meals told him.

"I felt alarmed about you, sir, so got Abram to come in from the stable and see if you were ill," said Clara Clements, who, with her husband Abram, looked to the comfort of Hugh Huntington and did all the work about the mansion, for the land the executor farmed out on shares.

They were of the better class of servants, in fact had seen the time when they owned their own home, and were, in fact, distantly related in some way to the Huntingtons.

When they met with reverses Colonel Huntington had sent for them, making the offer of a position as housekeeper to the wife and of head gardener to the man, for he had been a florist.

It was these two who had been witnesses of Colonel Huntington's will, and, when all the others had been dismissed by Hugh Huntington as executor, and possible heir, they had been retained and they alone.

"Oh, no, Clara, I am all right, only very tired, for I had a visitor last night, one who dropped in very unexpectedly, and as we sat up late I overslept myself."

"Yes, sir, Abram said, when he closed up the house, he was sure some one was here with you."

"Who do you think he claims to be, Clara?"

"Surely I cannot guess, sir."

"Why none other than Master Hazel; but go and knock at his door and tell him to come to breakfast. You will find him in the Red Room in the other wing."

"Yes, sir."

And Clara departed upon her errand, but soon returned with the information that there was no one in the room.

"What! has he gone, I wonder?"

"There is no one there, sir, and the piazza door is open, so I suppose he has gone out."

"Is there no bundle there?"

"No, sir; but the bed has been slept in, I noticed."

"Perhaps he did leave early this morning, and yet I am surprised if he did so. I'll take a stroll around the grounds, and look him up."

But the search about the grounds was of no avail, and Abram Clements had seen no one leave, though he arose early.

The room had been occupied and the bed slept in, but the bundle of clothing was gone, so that indicated that the guest had silently departed without taking leave of his host.

To Abram the executor explained that a tramp had come there late at night, and had claimed to be Hazel Huntington, the heir.

He had shown him that the time was up, that he came too late, and yet, believing him to be the heir, he had given him a hundred thousand dollars in ten checks, payable at New York and Philadelphia banks.

"See, here are the stubs in my check-book, Abram, so I feel that I have done my duty."

"You have, sir, you have," cried Abram, and his wife added:

"Heaven will bless you, sir, for your act to the poor boy."

"He was a good, boy, sir, and we all liked him, and we are glad that he has at least got something."

"Something?"

"Well, I guess he's got a pretty snug fortune," echoed Abram, and both he and his wife seemed delighted at the good fortune that had befallen the exiled heir.

After having his breakfast, Hugh Huntington drove to the station and took the train for New York.

It was late when he returned home, and his first question was if the tramp heir had been seen or heard of.

Neither Abram nor Clara could tell him anything about the visitor of the night before, yet, so deep was their interest in him that they asked the executor to tell them again of his visit, all that he had said, and anything else he might think of that would interest them in the young man.

"You seem strangely interested in that fellow, Abram, you and your wife, and as he cost me a small fortune, I am anxious to forget him."

"You know that I am now the heir to the Surf Spray estate, and it is my intention to live somewhat differently from what I have in the past, and I wish to talk to you both about it."

The two were at once interested in what the master of Surf Spray intended to say and expressed themselves accordingly.

"You know," he went on, lighting his cigar as he arose from the dinner-table, that I have simply been executor before, and up to this date."

"I have drawn as my salary only the amount I was getting when my lamented uncle called me to him."

"I cut down expenses, discharged a dozen servants whom he had employed here, sold useless truck, horses and vehicles and ran the place upon pure business principles."

"You have indeed, sir," Abram admitted.

"And you have done splendidly sir," added Clara.

"Yes; but, as I have now become master here, I intend to lead a different life; in fact, Abram and Clara, I intend to get married," and the words fell like a shock upon the two servants.

CHAPTER IX.

STARTLING SURPRISE.

THE two servants looked at each other, and at Hugh Huntington, aghast at his words that showed his determination to get married.

They had regarded him as a bachelor for life, one who never cared for the society of ladies, and had no idea that such an intention as marrying had ever entered his wise head, for they looked upon him as a very wise, level headed man.

At last Clara replied to his expressed determination with:

"You intend to get married, sir?"

"Yes."

"I never suspected you, sir, of that weakness," said Abram, who was a hen-pecked man.

"Well, it is a weakness; I admit, for a man should not be tied down in life to a woman's whims."

"But I shall always be my own master, and I feel that I should marry, now that I am the possessor of a vast fortune, the real master of Surf Spray."

"You know best, sir, and I suppose we will consider that you have given us notice to leave, sir?"

"Nothing of the kind, Clara, for you are to resume your duties as housekeeper, and have charge of the house, while I shall make Abram manager of the estate, so he can be over all, and you are to have your rooms in the rear wing of the mansion, and not outside in the annex as before."

"You are very kind, sir."

"And of course your wages will be increased five dollars each a month, though you will really have less to do."

"I thank you, sir."

"But who is to be the happy lady, sir?" asked Clara, unable to longer keep down her curiosity.

"I shall marry Miss Myrtle Marsden, Clara."

"Ah! what a beautiful and lovely girl, sir!"

"That is just why I wish her for my wife."

"But now, to business."

"Yes, sir."

"You have a son whom you may wish to get a place for, say as my private secretary, for you have had him well educated, I understand?"

"Yes, sir; Luke is our only child, sir, and a good boy, though a trifle wild; but we have had him well educated, sir, as you say, and he now has a position in the West which pays him well, and where he can work his way up, so we would not wish to take him from it, sir, though thanking you."

"Very well; let him remain where he is, for I only spoke, thinking I could help you, and him."

"Thank you, sir; but he is doing so well he writes us that he will soon make a fortune and take us to live with him."

"I hope that he may, though I would be sorry to lose you; but now let me tell you that I wish you, Clara, to engage me an excellent cook, a kitchen-girl as well, a butler, and a house-girl, with what others you may deem necessary."

"I shall want a coachman and stable-man as well also, and they must come when I get the house ready for them, for I shall have it thoroughly overhauled and refurnished, the grounds beautified and everything done to make it a palatial home, worthy of my fortune."

"I shall purchase horses and vehicles, and all that I need, and within a couple of months' time this old mansion will be a very different scene from what it is to-day."

"Now you know my wishes, both of you, and can act accordingly."

The two bowed, taking the last words as a dismissal from the presence of the master of Surf Spray, and soon after Hugh Huntington was left alone.

He arose from his easy-chair, threw his cigar into the fire and began to pace to and fro.

For a long while he did this, and then at last began to muse aloud, but not until he heard Abram go his rounds for the night and soon saw the light in their rooms extinguished.

"Yes, I shall marry Myrtle Marsden, for she will accept me beyond all doubt."

"What do I care that she had a girl-love for Bert Manning, for he is in his grave and she has long since forgotten him."

"Yes, she shall be my wife."

He threw himself into his chair once more, but seemed ill at ease, arose, looked at the clock and saw that it was not yet eleven.

Then he looked at his watch and muttered:

"Yes, the clock is right; I will go now."

He went out into the hall as he spoke and put on his heavy coat, and was moving toward the door when he heard a quick step upon the piazza.

He started visibly and his face paled, while he quickly threw off his coat and hat.

Then came a knock with the heavy, old-fashioned knocker that was upon the massive oaken door, and, after a moment of hesitation, Hugh Huntington advanced and turned the key in the heavy lock.

Opening the door, he saw standing there a tall form clad in a heavy storm-coat, and heard the words:

"Ah, Hugh, do you not know me—your cousin, Hazel Huntington?"

Hugh Huntington gave a gasp, but could not speak, while his face turned livid, for this was not the vagabond claimant of the night before, not the one to whom he had paid a fortune to get rid of; but, instead, another heir to Surf Spray, and it was not yet twelve o'clock!

CHAPTER X.

THE HEIR'S DEMAND.

AGAIN was Hugh Huntington late in rising, and when he came to breakfast both Mrs. Clements and her husband noticed that he had a haggard appearance, as though he had not slept well.

"Late hours do not not agree with you, sir."

"No; yet why do you say so, Clara?" he asked petulantly.

"Well, sir, you look almost ill."

"I do feel badly this morning, for I have been up two nights in succession—no, I care for nothing else than a cup of coffee, and you can take the other breakfast away."

"You had a visitor last night, sir," said, or rather suggested Abram, who came in for his orders for the day.

"How do you know that?" quickly demanded the master of Surf Spray.

"Well, sir, you know I lock the gates at night, when you are not away from home, and last night I did so, but this morning saw where a carriage had driven to the entrance and finding the gate locked had backed out and driven away, the one who came in it getting over the fence."

"How do you know that he got over the fence?"

"I saw his tracks, sir, in the mud, for it was muddy you know, sir, before it froze up last night, and the stain was on the fence."

"You are very observing, Abram."

"I like to be on the watch, sir."

"That is right."

"Yes, as you say, I had a visitor last night."

"But he is not here, sir?"

"You know that, too."

"I saw no tracks leaving, sir, but then if he stayed late the ground was frozen, I know, though I did not notice any wheel-marks where the carriage had returned."

"He did not return by carriage, Abram."

"It was a long walk for him, sir, and cold and blustering."

"Yes."

"But, who do you think my visitor was?"

"I have no idea, sir."

"It was Hazel Huntington."

"Master Hazel, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then he came back last night, as I suppose he could not get the money, not being known at the banks."

"You are wrong, Abram."

"Then he got the money, sir?"

"Oh, yes, he did; but it was not that Hazel."

"I don't understand, sir."

"It was another Hazel who was my visitor last night."

"You are poking fun at me, sir."

"I never was more serious in my life, Abram."

"Then my wits are out, sir."

"I sat up late, and heard a step on the piazza, so went to the door when a knock came."

"Yes, sir."

"I saw there a man who called me Cousin Hugh, and said that he was Hazel Huntington."

"Oh, Lord, sir!"

"Of course I was surprised, and so asked him in to have a better look at him."

"I thought, at first, it might be the vagabond heir of the night before, returned all dressed up."

"But it was not he."

"Who was it then, sir?"

"Hazel Huntington, I told you."

"But there can't be two of them, sir."

"So I thought, but this one claimed, as the other one had, to be Hazel Huntington."

"But you knew better, sir."

"I thought that I did; but he would stand no contradiction upon that point; and more: professed to be no beggar, said that he was

not a poor man, but had made money, and so had come back to see his father."

"To see a dead man, sir?" asked Abram, in a tone of horror.

"Well, he did not know, he told me, that his father was dead, and so said that he had come back to see if the colonel would not forget and forgive and allow him to return to his home once more."

"You believed him, sir?"

"I rather think that I did, Abram."

"But the other, sir."

"Hazel Number One?"

"Yes, sir."

"He was an arrant impostor, and I will never see him any more, and I hope never hear of him again."

"And you believe in this other man, sir?"

"Number Two?"

"Yes, sir."

"I do."

"Then what can you do, sir?"

"I offered to buy him off, Abram."

"Did he accept, sir?"

"No."

"He refused?"

"Yes, though I told him that I was the heir, as he came too late, and being master of Surf Spray, I intended to so remain, and he could do all he wished to force me out."

"I offered to give him a liberal allowance, told him how I had been imposed on, and yet he would hear to nothing, only replied that he had not come for money, but, as his father had forgiven him when dying, and had left him his fortune, he expected me to turn it over to him, and that he would be generous with me, under the circumstances, giving me one-half the inheritance, though he would retain Surf Spray as part of his portion."

"And you refused, sir?"

"I am no fool, Abram, to give my fortune away, and so we parted," was the quiet response of Hugh Huntington, and he added:

"Now I will ride over and see Miss Myrtle Marsden, so get my horse for me, Abram."

CHAPTER XI.

MYRTLE.

MYRTLE MARSDEN was truly a very beautiful girl, in both face and form, and her character was equally as lovely.

She had a willowy form, was graceful in every movement, dressed with extreme taste, and had a wealth of really golden hair that was in striking contrast to her large, lustrous and expressive eyes.

Her teeth were as even as though artificial, white as milk and her lips full and rosy.

It had been seven years since she had been saved from drowning by Bert Manning, and afterward had been rescued from death by Hazel Huntington, and she had grown from the lovely girl on the verge of sixteen then into the fascinating maiden of twenty-two.

Gossip had it in the long ago that she had fallen in love with Bert Manning, and yet, meeting Hazel Huntington as she had, held also a tender spot in her heart for him, especially as there had been a sad romance in his life, his courtly manners were most winning and he was the heir to Surf Spray and its accompanying fortune.

Be this as it may, it was certain that Myrtle's heart was not broken by the departure of the two young men, and so gossip had it that she was really a heartless flirt.

As years passed on, however, suitor after suitor was refused by her, and still she held her claim to being a reigning belle.

At any dance among the old families, at the balls given in summer at the resorts, and when visiting the city as she often did with her father, Myrtle held full sway as queen of beauties and coquettes.

Women loved her as devotedly as did men, and to all she was kind, thoughtful of their claims upon her, and friendly.

When a man was led to throw himself at her feet and beg for her heart and hand, she was wont to refuse him in a way that soothed the refusal, took the sting of rejection out as much as possible, and the affair ended with her still being his friend.

Why it was that no man ever won her love her father did not know, yet the thought delighted him that he was not to lose her as he had feared.

He felt the power of her beauty, the charm of her presence, and knew that some day he must give her up, that one day a man would come along upon whom she would lavish the whole wealth of her affection, would love with all the ardor of her passionate soul.

If such a man she had ever met, Enoch Marsden had never yet discovered the fact, though at times he had surprised her in moments of sadness.

At such moments the thought would come to him that she had loved and that some barrier stood between her and the one upon whom she had bestowed her regard.

Could it be that some man, already married, had won her heart? he wondered.

If so, she was of too proud a nature to ever let the secret be known.

Could it be, he again thought, that there was really some truth in the idle rumor of years before, that she had loved Bert Manning, and that, while mourning his death, she was hiding her grief from the world?

If such was the case, he knew that Myrtle would be true to her lost love, that she would never marry, and he was glad that it might be so.

But there came upon his heart a cloud as he recalled that he had thrown away thousands of dollars, had drawn his deposits out of the banks, had sold his bonds and stocks, and, to still keep up his reckless and extravagant mode of living, he had secretly begun to put mortgages upon his place.

He had begun at first with only a thousand dollars for a few months, and another had soon followed.

Then it was a couple of thousand for six months, and next came a bunching of all for one year, and these summed up five thousand.

When the year ended they could not be paid and so they were put off by adding them to another five thousand, and at the end of two years there was no less than fifteen thousand on the estate.

The third year ended with twenty-five thousand dollars hanging over his head, and he knew that another five thousand was the limit, for the one who loaned him the money had told him so.

Driven to the wall by debts, he at last got the last five thousand, paid all of his indebtedness, and then saw only ruin staring him in the face before another year should go by.

And then in despair he longed to have Myrtle wed some good man, though great would be his sorrow at giving her up.

But when he half-way suggested the thought to her, she had merrily laughed and said:

"No, papa, I do not care to marry, and never will until I meet the man I love."

It was several months after this that Enoch Marsden received a visit one day from one whose name, when announced, caused him to become very pale and nervous.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MONEY-LENDER.

THE visitor who was announced to Enoch Marsden was none other than Hugh Huntington.

As has been said, he was not an ill-favored man, yet not one whose face was very attractive, and his manners were brusque, though not intentionally so.

His integrity was undoubted, he gave to charity, he was considered a thorough business man and he was popular, though very hard to get acquainted with.

He seldom made a visit, and received few callers, and, looked upon as the real master of Surf Spray, he was envied by many, respected, and some played the sycophant to him.

He had dined several times at Riverside Rest, once or twice remained there, all night, when a storm would catch him there and paid an occasional visit to Mr. Marsden, besides having met Myrtle also now and then at a hotel dance in the summer.

That was the limit of his friendly intercourse with the Marsdens, though the master of Riverside Rest had always seemed most anxious, far too much so Myrtle thought, to cultivate the owner of the Surf Spray millions.

Riverside Rest was a very grand old house, large, built of brick and with ornamental grounds surrounding it that were a perfect Eden of loveliness, for Myrtle dearly loved flowers and spent a great deal of her time in cultivating them.

There was quite a large farm attached to the place, and it had increased in value until it was said to be worth fifty thousand dollars, with the prospect of adding to this value rapidly as Surf Spray had done, through the influx of summer visitors looking for houses by the sea.

When Hugh Huntington rode into the Riverside Rest grounds, he did so with the air of one who felt perfectly at home.

He told the servant who took his horse, to stable the animal and give him his noonday meal, and then he went into the library where he was informed Marsden would soon join him.

He was dressed with unusual care, in a new riding suit, slouch hat, and boots, and surveying himself in the hall mirror as he entered, he thought he was by no means an unattractive man.

Mr. Marsden did not keep him waiting long, and entering received him with his bluff, cordial manner, while he said:

"Glad to see you, my dear Huntington, and I hope this is a friendly visit, not a business one, and we will have you to dinner?"

"Yes, Mr. Marsden, it is a friendly visit, and a business one as well, combining business and pleasure, you know, while I shall be glad to dine with you, as I am anxious also to see Miss Myrtle."

"She is away on a drive just now, but will soon return, so sit down and let me first know what I can do for you in the way of business."

"Well, Mr. Marsden, I wish you to pardon me for being very frank, very plain-spoken with you, in fact."

"Certainly, sir, if your frankness is prompted by friendly regard for me."

"It certainly is, sir."

"Then let me hear what you have to say, Huntington."

"I wish you to take all as I mean it, sir, from a sincere friendship for you."

"What has gone wrong, sir?"

"Nothing as yet, only I happen to be well informed, and I am aware that you have only this house left of all your once very liberal fortune."

"Well, sir?"

"Ten years ago you were worth a quarter of a million, and your interest money and this place gave you a very liberal income of over twelve thousand a year, and your living."

"Well, sir?"

"You, however, go through with your money until now you have only the living which this place affords, and though it would bring perhaps under the auctioneer's hammer forty thousand dollars, when your mortgages are paid, you would not have enough left to support you for a couple of years."

"To what does all this homily upon my financial affairs tend, Mr. Huntington?"

"Just this, my dear sir, that you have gone about as far as you can, to the end of your rope, so to speak, and in just two months the mortgage on your property will come due."

"I am aware of that, sir."

"It is for the large sum of thirty thousand dollars, sir."

"It is, as you know."

"And six per cent. interest for one year, adding eighteen hundred more."

"Well?"

"Are you prepared to pay this sum, sir?"

"I am not."

"What will you do?"

"Renew, of course."

"Are you prepared to pay the eighteen hundred interest?"

"I am not, for I have only three hundred dollars in the house."

"Then I cannot renew, Mr. Marsden."

"But you must."

"I cannot, sir."

"Then I am ruined," groaned Enoch Marsden, his face as white as a dead man's.

"Not if I can help you out, sir."

"Ah! you will help me, then?"

"I will give you up that mortgage and interest without one dollar, Mr. Marsden, in return for your daughter's hand in marriage," was the cool response of the money-lender.

CHAPTER XIII.

A GOLDEN HAND.

MR. MARSDEN was fairly astounded at the cool and business-like proposition of Hugh Huntington.

The thought had never entered his mind that Hugh Huntington could love a woman, or hold affection for any one.

He knew him as the executor of the Surf Spray estate, and supposed that he was making a good thing out of it for himself, though every one united in speaking of him as a business man of the strictest integrity, and all knew that the property under his management had doubled in value.

Mr. Marsden also was aware of the fact that if the real heir did not put in an appearance within a given time that Hugh Huntington would inherit all, and yet he was taking every means in his power to find the man who would keep him out of a fortune.

He was not dissipated or extravagant, could be entertaining when he willed, but was regarded by all as a kind of a hermit, seldom going into the society of ladies and never intimate with men.

He therefore astounded Mr. Marsden when he made the proposition to purchase his daughter's hand for him, which it really amounted to, for just thirty-one thousand eight hundred dollars.

Being too surprised to speak at once, the master of Riverside Rest sat regarding the master of Surf Spray intently.

For once in his life Hugh Huntington grew nervous, for he feared he was going to lose in the venture he had made.

So he did not wait for Enoch Marsden to reply, but said:

"I understand your situation fully, Mr. Marsden, and that you are unable to give your daughter the wardrobe and presents you would wish, and so I have thought it over and determined to make this proposition."

"I wish to have a grand wedding, for I intend, when married, to live a different life, for now, permit me to say, that I am master of Surf Spray, for I hold the property now by legal inheritance."

"You are aware that the estate is worth a million, but let me confidentially inform you that it will double that amount, with a few thousands over to spare."

"The heir, who was exiled, not having put in his claim to the date specified, holds no right or title now, though I have a certain sum set aside to pay him, if demanded, rather than have a litigation."

"Now I therefore own all, and I went to the city yesterday to get workmen to put the place in fine condition, purchase new furniture, horses and carriages, and get servants sufficient to keep up a style worthy of my wealth."

"In offering you, therefore, the amount of your mortgages and interest, I still understand that you would have nothing for wedding gifts, trousseau and *et ceteras*, such as will be needed."

"So permit me to say that I will pay into your hands, with those mortgages, well, say sufficient money to make this sum thirty-five thousand dollars, thus giving you twenty-eight hundred for expenses."

"Then, sir, with your house free of debt, no daughter to provide for, and no debts, you should certainly be able to live here in luxury, and not run into indebtedness; in fact, you must do so as far as I am concerned, for I will not advance another dollar."

"Now, sir, you know my business offer for your daughter's hand, and to her I shall offer my heart, for I greatly admire her, my hand and the fortune that accompanies them, and she may judge herself, at whatever value she may put upon my heart, that my hand is a golden one."

"Do you fully understand, Mr. Marsden?"

During this long and business-like way of putting his proposal by Hugh Huntington, Enoch Marsden continued to get back his equanimity, and was now perfectly cool.

He saw just the situation, was glad to know that Huntington was now the master of Surf Spray Hall, and saw a way of saving his own home, and having it unincumbered, at the same time receiving money enough to give Myrtle some handsome wedding gifts and a fine wedding.

After all was over he certainly could live without running into debt, for his place would support him, and he had a few hundreds monthly from renting cottages as a part of his lands.

Yes, he saw the situation exactly, and could not but feel that Hugh Huntington had acted squarely.

But there was one great consideration to remember, and that was Myrtle.

Would she embrace the golden opportunity?

Would she accept the golden hand offered by the master of Surf Spray and its millions?

That was the question first to consider, and as he considered it Enoch Marsden saw Myrtle ride into the grounds.

CHAPTER XIV.

MYRTLE'S VISIT.

At last the master of Riverside Rest spoke, in answer to the proposal of Hugh Huntington which had at first so startled him.

"Mr. Huntington, I cannot say that I feel flattered by your offer for the hand of my daughter, as you put it upon the basis of a sale."

"What else is it, sir, between you and me?"

"To Miss Marsden I make a different proposal of my heart, my hand and my fortune."

"Very true, very true, and to me, as her father, you are willing to relinquish your claims held by all mortgages?"

"I am, sir, with a bonus of twenty-eight hundred dollars."

"Well, on the face of it it looks like a business transaction, but—"

"It is nothing more or less, sir."

"I hate to put it that way."

"Miss Marsden is not in our transaction, sir, simply your good will and influence purchased."

"I see; but she may not love you."

"Has she said to the contrary?"

"Oh, no, nor other in your favor than that she holds a friendly regard for you."

"No, man, Mr. Marsden, can understand a woman."

"They are born a riddle and die unsolved."

"Why I never knew my own mother, sir, and I never expect to understand any other woman."

"They smile with tears in their heart, they pretend love with hate in their hearts, they are cunning, clever, ingenious, and few of them ever read a man aright, while no woman ever understands another of her sex."

"So then, sir, Miss Marsden may be desperately in love with me and yet never show her regard."

"I am not a homely man, and I have seen handsomer men than I."

"I am not ill-shapen, or awkward, my brains are equal to the emergencies which I have demanded of them, I am no coward, do not fear the darkness, nor the light of day, and have defrauded no man of a dollar, for remember, you offered me ten per-cent interest, fearing I might refuse a loan, and I took but six per-cent."

"I read for instruction, have a good library, enjoy life as it comes to me, and, having but one life to live, with my years now numbering thirty-five, shall enjoy the remainder of my existence to the full bent of my humor and my pocketbook."

"Can I say more, sir?"

"You certainly cannot," was Enoch Marsden's most emphatic response, looking at the man in utter amazement, mingled with admiration, and he added:

"I think I know you better now, Mr. Huntington, and if Myrtle consents to your proposal, you have my free consent to make her your wife."

"I congratulate you upon your decision, sir."

"Miss Marsden has just ridden up to the door, I see."

As Hugh Huntington uttered the words Myrtle entered the library, saying in her cheery way as she did so:

"Papa, I had a splendid gallop of it down the shore, and like the new horse you gave me immensely, though there is a great deal of the Old Nick in his disposition—ah! I was unaware that you had company—pardon me."

"It is our friend Mr. Huntington, Myrtle," and Huntington came from the shadow of the heavy portieres over the bay window and approached the maiden.

She looked very beautiful, with her well fitting riding-habit of dark-blue, her slouch hat and sable plume and face flushed from rapid riding, while her wealth of red-gold hair, half-shaken loose from its comb, fell in masses upon her shoulders.

"Ah, Mr. Huntington, I am glad to see you, and I may as well confess it now, I have just been to Surf Spray to pay you a visit."

Enoch Marsden was utterly dumfounded at this confession, and Hugh Huntington was caught wholly off his guard, and cried:

"You have been to see me, Miss Marsden?"

"Yes, sit right there by this table, for I wish to have a talk with you, and that is why I went to see you."

Hugh Huntington placed a chair for Myrtle and in silence sat down himself, just where she had told him to be seated, while Enoch Marsden looked dazed.

"Mr. Huntington," began Myrtle slowly and distinctly, "I wish to say to you that of late I have observed that my father was deeply worried, and I set to work to discover the cause."

"I looked over his property, his income and all, and discovered that he had lived so far beyond his means, which I had not sus-

pected before, as to mortgage his place for thirty thousand dollars."

"I found out that you held the mortgage, and that it, with a year's interest, was due very soon and not a dollar to pay it with."

"My father, in taking his afternoon naps, was wont to talk aloud, and I overheard him mutter such sentences as:

"'I am ruined!' 'Huntington will be merciless' 'He will sell me out,' 'I'll not have a dollar left.'"

"Of course I was greatly worried, though not for myself."

"I love riches, it is true, but I can live as a poor girl, if there is need for it, and that is why I went to see you, to ask you a favor."

CHAPTER XV.

A WOMAN'S WAX.

If Enoch Marsden had wished to speak, if he had desired to break in upon what his daughter was saying, it was not in his power to do so.

He did not know that she suspected his financial difficulties, and to know now that she was aware of all, and had taken the settlement of the difficulty into her own hands, completely dazed him.

There he sat in utter silence while she talked.

Hugh Huntington on the other hand was also nonplused, and yet, as he listened to Myrtle he became perfectly composed and a look of complete satisfaction with the situation spread over his face.

He listened with deepest attention, and only at last said:

"What is the favor you wish to ask of me, Miss Marsden?"

Myrtle took from the pocket of her riding habit a slip of paper and said:

"The mortgage amounts to thirty thousand dollars?"

"It does."

"There are eighteen hundred dollars due in interest, or will be soon?"

"You are right."

"This place to-day, under the hammer, would bring fifty thousand dollars."

"Yes, perhaps more."

"This part of the country is yearly improving, the land value is increasing rapidly, and within five years more Riverside Rest will double its present worth."

"I think so."

"But this eighteen hundred dollars interest must be paid."

"True."

"Now we have here carriages and horses more than are needed, and several more servants than we need, and can get along without."

"The former will sell at all of a thousand dollars, and expenses will be cut down by discharging the extra servants and sale of the horses."

"You are a rich man, and I have some paintings which took premiums, and were valued high, but I would not sell them, as they were my own work; but I will let them go to you, as I learn you were the one who wished them, at the price then put upon them."

"This will give you the other eight hundred in interest, and cut off two thousand dollars of the mortgage."

"In another year father can sell land enough to cut off nine thousand more, and the place will support us meanwhile."

"For this it was, Mr. Huntington, that I went to see you, and this is the favor I desired to ask, and now do ask of you?"

"Oh Myrtle!" was all that Enoch Marsden could say, but Hugh Huntington looked pleased.

"My dear Miss Marsden, let me express my great admiration of your thorough business qualities, for you have shown yourself a wonderful financier."

"But, setting aside your favor, your proposition, let me tell you why I came here to-

day, and of a plan I desire to offer, to settle your father's financial difficulties, for now that you are aware of his heavy indebtedness, there is no need of further concealment of facts from you."

"None, sir, I wish to know all."

"Then I shall be as business-like as you have been."

"Pray do."

"I came here to offer your father his mortgages, with full interest, in return for your heart and hand, and such an offer I made him before your arrival half an hour ago."

This was not to be misunderstood, and Myrtle did not pretend not to understand.

She started at the business-like proposal, the color left her face, and her lips quivered.

But only for an instant, as she regained her composure at once, and said, in a tone of sarcasm:

"I must thank you for the value you place upon my heart and hand, Mr. Huntington."

"Remember, this is the offer made to your father."

"Ah! then I am to have a separate offer?"

"Assuredly, for I am now, Miss Marsden, the master of Surf Spray Hall, and its vast properties, which make me twice a millionaire."

"I therefore offer you my heart, hand and fortune, asking you to name a day when you will become my wife."

"It is needless for me to make a sentimental fool of myself, and tell you I love you, for my conduct in the future must be proof of that."

"Thank you for your not bringing in sentiment, Mr. Huntington, and I feel flattered at your high estimation of my worth, and your kindness toward my father and myself; but I am peculiar in my creed of the affinities of life and really must love the man I marry."

"I do not love you, Mr. Huntington."

"Bah! what do I care for that?" was the cool response.

"Ah! you would accept my hand without my heart?"

"Why assuredly, for love is boyish nonsense, well enough for school-children."

"But my heart and hand go together, Mr. Huntington."

"I am sorry for that, as you cannot therefore save your father from the ruin that must come upon him," was the calm reply of the man, and his coldly-uttered words and icy look caused Myrtle to shudder as she gazed upon him, while from the lips of Enoch Marsden came a distinctly-uttered moan.

CHAPTER XVI.

MYRTLE'S COMPACT.

MYRTLE MARSDEN's face paled at the last remark of Hugh Huntington, and her father also looked as though he had been dealt a crushing blow, as indeed he had.

Myrtle's nerve however did not desert her, and glancing quickly at her father she then turned her eyes firmly and fixedly upon Huntington.

She seemed to read him through and through, to look into his very soul.

He met her gaze unflinchingly.

He had said what he intended and it was for her to reply.

At last she did so.

"Let us thoroughly understand each other, Mr. Huntington," she said.

"That is just what I wish above all things, Miss Marsden."

"You have offered to give to my father his indebtedness to you, if I marry you?"

"Yes."

"And, Myrtle, Mr. Huntington has said that he will add twenty-eight hundred in cash, as funds for me to fit you out with and give you a fine wedding," said Enoch Mars-

den eagerly, growing selfish as he stood between hope and despair.

"Ah! he is more generous than I thought even," but the sarcasm made no impression upon Hugh Huntington, who bowed and said:

"My generosity in this transaction does not include you, Miss Marsden."

"Not now, but later you offer me your heart, hand and fortune?"

"I do, and that is where your interest comes in."

"I see."

"In exchange you wish my love and my hand?"

"I wish your hand, and your love I am indifferent about."

"I like you better for your frankness, sir, and did I accept it would be a great relief to me to feel that I was not compelled to try and love you."

"That rests wholly with your own sweet self," and Huntington bowed and smiled.

"If I refuse, then you will foreclose those mortgages on this property?"

"Certainly, or offer your father forty thousand for his place as it stands, without furniture or stock, say eight thousand in cash above his debt to me."

"You are a business man I see, Mr. Huntington, and really not grasping, for you give full value I admit."

"About that."

"And you would not make the arrangement I suggested awhile since, for us to sell out some of our horses and vehicles, and buy my paintings, to pay the interest and a small part of the mortgage?"

"No, I would not do that, but I would buy your paintings, for I know their value, like them exceedingly, and am going to make some purchases of works of art for my house."

"Thanks for the implied compliment, sir, and the intention."

"But is this your firm decision?"

"It is."

"Irrevocable?"

"Irrevocable, Miss Marsden."

"Then, Mr. Huntington, I am in a position to talk business."

"I am wholly at your service to hear you, Miss Marsden."

"When a young girl, I did consider love and marriage."

"Of late years such a thought has not entered my head."

"Now I consider marriage, but love does not enter into the consideration."

"You offer me your hand and fortune, I believe?"

"And my heart."

"That I do not consider, or care for, but your hand I value, for it commands a fortune."

"Your brain is valuable, for it will aid you to add to your fortune and keep you from being a bore, for you can be entertaining."

"Now I accept your offer, on condition that you cancel those mortgages and interest my father owes to you, and as for the difference promised, we will not accept it."

"But, as my father needs some money, and this is strictly business, let me say that I will take you at your offer to buy my paintings."

"I will do so."

"There are seven of them, sir, and their value was set at just three thousand dollars."

"I will send you a check for them tomorrow, along with the canceled mortgages and receipt for interest paper."

"What, will you do so before you receive payment?"

"Yes, I will take your promise as security."

"Thank you."

"But let us understand each other that within a given time I am to become your wife, leaving out of the contract the promise

to love you, that I am to be mistress of your household, and my own mistress as well, and be a true wife to you in all things."

"Yes, and I feel that you will."

"In return you are to be my husband, loyal if not loving, and I am to share equally your home and your fortune."

"You are."

"There is my hand, then, Hugh Huntington, that the compact is sealed between us," and the man grasped the outstretched hand.

"Now you must dine with us, but pardon me while I go and make myself more presentable," and Myrtle swept from the room, while Hugh Huntington said, with a show of enthusiasm:

"That is the very woman for my wife."

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO LETTERS.

THE following day, true to his word, Hugh Huntington sent to Myrtle the canceled mortgages, a receipt for the interest due, and a check for three thousand dollars for the paintings, which she had sent off to Surf Spray by wagon as soon as it was done.

His letter accompanying was like the man and to the point:

"I send Miss Marsden the canceled mortgages and receipt for interest as follows, and her father owes me nothing from this date and is under no obligations to me."

"I send check also for paintings, which I will ask her to select places for."

"Also, I desire that she drive over with her father to look over Surf Spray on Monday next, when the carpenter, paper-hanger, and the painter will be here to take her orders as to what improvements she desires made, alterations and all else that may strike her fancy in her new home."

"It is needless to say that cost need not be taken into consideration."

"If she will select the new furniture needed for parlors, dining-room and bed-chambers, along with her own suite of apartments, I shall feel obliged, the right wing being devoted to her use, the left wing I still retaining as my quarters—that is, the second story."

"I will see that she has carriages and horses to please her, and she will oblige me by engaging a maid for her own especial services at once."

"The butler, Abram Clements, will consult with her as to her wishes, and his wife, Clara Clements, will act as housekeeper, they being old servants of Surf Spray."

"Miss Marsden will oblige me by sending all bills to me here, and, as she will doubtless be very busy between now and the time set for our marriage, two months hence, I shall not worry her with my presence, but am ready for any suggestions and communications from her."

"Permit me to send herewith also an engagement ring as a pledge of my good faith, and, with kind remembrances to Miss Marsden's father, I sign myself,

"HUGH HUNTINGTON."

Myrtle read this letter over twice, and then said:

"Father, Mr. Hugh Huntington is a jewel—if I was a school-girl still, I would make it more emphatic and say that he is a dandy."

"Ah, my child, I do not know how all this is going to turn out."

"Splendidly, father."

"I hope so, but I fear not, and I see now the folly I have been guilty of by my extravagant living."

"I can see it now when it is too late."

"Nonsense, father, do not talk so."

"It is the aim of a woman to marry, you know, and marriage is certainly a lottery."

"Now I have drawn a capital prize from

the lottery of wedlock, for I will have a sensible man for a husband, and no sentimental nonsense.

"He was honest with me, then with you, did not mince matters, did not lie, but spoke his thoughts and intentions right out.

"He is a clever man, a gentleman, fearless by nature, generous in his way, refined, a scholar, a connoisseur in art, or he would never have wished to purchase my paintings."

And Myrtle laughed.

"Then too, papa, he has canceled those mortgages all upon my word, and if I wished to do so, I could laugh at him and tell him to get his money if he could.

"He has asked me to come over and fit the old stone mansion up to my liking and send him the bills, and shows delicacy in saying that my paintings are to hang where I like best.

"Then too he sends me a pledge of our engagement.

"Let us see what his taste is in an engagement-ring."

She opened the package which Abram had brought with the papers, and took from a small velvet case a massive band of gold, half an inch in width, and an eighth of an inch in thickness.

In the gold were set a five-carat diamond, with an opal of equal size and beauty upon either side of it.

"Oh! how beautiful!" cried Myrtle with real delight, handing it to her father, who examined it critically and looking to the value of it said:

"It is magnificent and never cost him a dollar under a thousand."

"All of that, father; but there is an old superstition that opals are unlucky."

"Then ask him to change those for rubies."

"Not for the world, father.

"I will wear the ring and defy ill fortune with a husband who is a millionaire," and again Myrtle laughed, though it seemed like forced laughter, there being no ring of mirth in it.

Going to her desk she sat down and wrote:

"Miss Marsden begs to thank Mr. Huntington for his perfect confidence in her promise, and she has already placed upon her finger the very superb pledge of her engagement to him, and for which she begs he will accept her sincere gratitude.

"Miss Marsden will be pleased to visit Surf Spray Hall with her father, and make suggestions as she is invited to do by Mr. Huntington, and she will consult with him as to the furniture and other purchases.

"Thanking him for the check for her paintings with remembrances from her father she begs to subscribe herself

"MISS MARSDEN."

Such was the letter that Abram bore back to the master of Surf Spray.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MYRTLE'S WELCOME.

TRUE to her pledge, Myrtle Marsden became the wife of Hugh Huntington upon the day agreed upon between them.

Riverside Rest had been freshened up for the occasion, and upon the day of the wedding a gala scene was presented there, for a New York caterer had sent down his chef and waiters, and a grand breakfast had been served to the hundred of invited guests.

The bride was arrayed in traveling costume, hat and gloves, for the couple were to start upon a tour of a month to the Southern States.

Her gifts were numerous and costly, for she was dearly loved by all who knew her; but the wedding presents of the groom were most valuable and useful, they being a phaeton and two ponies, a handsome carriage and horses, a riding horse and saddle, bridle and whip, a superb piano and three complete

sets of jewels—one of diamonds, another of rubies, and a third of opals, all with necklace and bracelets.

Myrtle had fitted herself out well, yet not extravagantly, and she would not allow her father to give her a single costly present.

"No, father, you are free of debt, and five hundred dollars will pay for the wedding breakfast, and a thousand will get all my wardrobe, leaving fifteen hundred for you to live on, while you must sell your extra horses and vehicles, and discharge all the servants except those you need for your own comfort.

"Put your money in bank, and then let the place support you, as it will do."

Had there been any one present who suspected any such a thing and listened, they would have observed that Myrtle did not repeat the word "love" after the clergyman, though all else she uttered distinctly.

Hugh Huntington did, however, say in full the "love and honor" clause.

He looked well in his well-fitting clothes, and the couple drove away from Riverside Rest to catch the train, while Enoch Marsden stood looking after them with tears in his eyes, and his lips muttered the words:

"Somehow I feel that Myrtle has made an ill omened alliance, and it was to save me from ruin alone, for her heart is in the grave with Bert Manning."

Surf Spray had indeed undergone a complete metamorphosis, for the painters, paper-hangers and carpenters had made a veritable palace of it.

It had been furnished throughout, carpeted and beautified, while works of art were to be seen upon every side, not to speak of a gallery full of paintings, statuary and curios.

The wing which was to be Myrtle's had a sitting-room, boudoir, and bed-chamber, with a small breakfast-room off of it and the conservatory filled with choicest flowers and plants adjoining.

Above her rooms were several great chambers, and on the same floor were parlors, the art gallery, large dining-room, sitting-room, music-room and large halls, a massive stairway leading above stairs, where there was a smoking-room, billiard saloon and library.

The other wing was the master's, with his library and office combined, his bed-chamber and breakfast-room.

The floor above him was used as a general store-room, and from there a stairway led to the third floor over the center of the house.

It was this third floor which Hugh Huntington had cut off, some half-a-dozen rooms in all, and a large cupola, as he said that it was not needed, and only contained rubbish which had been in the Huntington family for a century, and which he was going to look over some day and weed out.

The door leading to the third floor was securely locked, the master kept the key, and no one dared venture there to investigate.

The stables had been filled with horses and carriages, and there were coachmen and grooms ready for orders when needed.

Mrs. Clements was the housekeeper, and Abram, who had obeyed the order of the master to wear livery, was the butler, while under his wife and himself were half a score of liveried servants.

The grounds had been greatly beautified, a massive new gateway and porter's lodge erected, fences all put in perfect trim, and in fact everything done to make Surf Spray a magnificent home.

Such was the grand old mansion to which Myrtle returned one beautiful spring afternoon, from her bridal tour in the South.

The birds were singing her a welcome, the flowers were all in bloom and perfuming the air, and the servants all had bright smiles of greeting as the carriage rolled up to the door.

"Welcome to Surf Spray Hall, Myrtle—your home," said Hugh Huntington springing from the carriage and extending his hand.

"It is beautiful—you are most kind," was her reply.

He led her to her chambers and left her with her maid, and then going to his own rooms called both Abram and Clara Clements to his presence to talk over matters transpiring during his absence of six weeks in the South.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FOILED FERRETS.

DICK DOOM, the Ferret, was one who went heart and soul into anything that he undertook.

Handsome as an Adonis, and graceful as a woman, possessing the powers of ventriloquism to a remarkable extent, a perfect reader of human nature, an actor skilled in impersonation, he was the very man for a detective.

A mystery himself, for not even the Secret Service chiefs whom he served knew his name or antecedents, he yet could raise the veil from every mystery.

He had accomplished marvels in that line, and the chiefs of the great cities were wont to send for Dick Doom when no one else could clear up an intricate case for them, and never yet had he made a failure.

He was unknown even to the detectives who served him, for he always appeared before all, except the chiefs, in disguise, and thus held a great advantage.

Having his peculiarities, as all men do, one was that he always carried with him a pair of solid gold handcuffs, until he had become known as the "Ferret of the Golden Fetters."

That Dick Doom was not his real name, the chiefs who employed him felt certain.

He never took a dollar until his case was finished, paid all expenses until the work was done, and had impersonated female characters so perfectly that several of the chiefs of police who knew him best often believed that Dick Doom was really a woman.

Such was the one whom the New York chief had sent for to come and undertake the strange case of solving the mystery hanging over Surf Spray Hall, a mansion and its masters with which the reader has already become somewhat acquainted.

Having undertaken the work, and made an appointment to receive the foiled detectives at a certain time, Dick Doom, when the chief had departed, threw open a large trunk in his room and took out a complete feminine garb.

He then rung the bell, and said, to the boy who answered it:

"I expect a number of visitors, and they will ask for Mr. Richards.

"I may not be in, but show them up, for Mrs. Richards will be here to receive them."

"Yes, sir—thank you, sir," and the boy departed, happy in the possession of a crisp dollar bill handed to him.

When registering, Dick Doom had asked for parlor and bedroom, and wrote down the names:

"MR. AND MRS. D. RICHARDS,

"Duluth, Minn."

When the boy had gone out, he locked the door, carried the clothes, taken from the trunk, into the bedroom, and began the preparation of his toilet.

Half an hour after, what appeared to be a woman of middle age came into the parlor and stood by the window, looking out upon the street.

She had dark hair, with streaks of gray in it, wore glasses and was neatly dressed.

That she was other than she appeared, no one would have believed.

As she stood there, a knock came at the door, and she went forward and opened it.

The bell-boy stood there, and a gentleman accompanied him.

"A gentleman to see Mr. Richards, ma'am," said the boy.

"Walk in, sir, and be seated."

"Mr. Richards is away, but I am here to attend to his business."

"May I ask if you come from the chief of the Secret Service, sir?"

"Yes, madam, and my name is James Gordon."

"Ah yes, that was the name given me."

"Well, Mr. Gordon, I am to question you, in the absence of Mr. Richards, regarding your services in the Surf Spray matter."

"Yes, madam, the chief sent me on that work."

"The place is in New Jersey, I believe?" and the speaker took a pencil and pad of paper to make notes.

"Yes, madam."

"What were you sent there for, Mr. Gordon?"

"To shadow the place and the people, and see if I could find anything suspicious about the life there."

"You were there how long?"

"Ten days."

"What did you discover?"

"Not a thing out of the way."

"Where were you?"

"I was on the place."

"In what capacity?"

"I played sick, and asked shelter, and I was subject to attacks, and they let me stay for ten days, and I kept my eyes open all the time."

"Both the lady of the house and the master were kind to me, and offered me aid when I came away."

"And you discovered nothing wrong?"

"Not a thing, madam."

"Mr. Gordon, come and see me to-morrow at this time."

The detective took his leave, and soon after another called. He, too, had made no discovery of wrong-doing at Surf Spray Hall.

A third had the same story to tell, as did a fourth, fifth, and so on, until a dozen had visited the disguised ferret, and not one had found the slightest clue that all was not right at the home of Millionaire Hugh Huntington.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HALF OF A SILVER DOLLAR.

"WELL, that certainly is a band of foiled ferrets," decided Dick Doom, who, as Mrs. Richards, had received and sharply questioned the visiting detectives.

Still in his disguise, he went down to dinner, and had just returned to his room when the chief of police opened the door, in answer to the room occupant's "Come in!"

"Ah, pardon me, madam, but I fear I have made a mistake in the room."

"No, sir, you are right, if you wished to see Mr. Richards."

"Yes, madam; is he engaged just now, for—"

"Be seated, please, for Mrs. Richards will entertain you, chief," and the voice of the ferret suddenly changed from feminine tones to masculine.

"See here, Dick Doom, you are the most arrant fraud I ever saw, and every time you wish to do so you coolly fool me."

"Why, I have lost half a dozen bets with you already that you could never deceive me again."

"I did not try to fool you, chief; only you know I never allow the men to know me as Dick Doom, so rigged myself out to deceive them."

"I did not expect you this evening."

"It's all right, my boy, only I do so hate to be taken in," and the chief laughed.

"Tell me what you discovered to-day?"

"That your ferrets knew nothing—that they were foiled."

"I told you as much."

"That causes me to be more determined to find out the secret that foiled them."

"You think there is a secret there then?"

"Oh, yes, chief, there must be, for without a basis that anonymous letter would not have been written."

"What are your views now?"

"I have none."

"What did you think of my men?"

"All shrewd, clever, intelligent fellows, beyond a doubt, though Gordon is the man I wish to have help me, for he took the best means to glean information, and I am pretty sure I can rely upon him thoroughly."

"You can, indeed."

"He went as a young farmer, returning to his home, and pretended to be taken ill at the place, so he was cared for there."

"Yes, chief, yet could not find the slightest clue that anything was going on wrong there."

"Nor could the others."

"No, sir. One went to look for work, another was seeking to buy a country home, a third hunting for blooded stock, and so on, with different excuses, they found a way to get into the grounds, and some to enter the house."

But I shall see what can be done in the way of getting at the secret crime hinted at in those letters that I have carefully read, and I would like to have Gordon go to the nearest village and remain there subject to my call."

"He can do so."

"I notice that he wears a beard and his hair rather long, so, if he cuts off both, he will be disguised, and he can go out as a book-peddler and perhaps make some discoveries that may aid me."

"I will order him to report to you to-morrow, Dick."

"I have already told him so, and, as I shall go in different disguises, I will give him one-half of a dollar piece that I have, and tell him when any one comes to him with the other half to obey them implicitly and trust them, be they man or woman, old or young."

"I can already picture in my mind's eye, Dick, that you are going to positively bewilder poor Gordon with your manifold disguises," said the chief, laughing.

"No, but I will have my eye on him, as I do on every one whom I start out to shadow a man."

"And you will leave town to-morrow night then?"

"Yes, and will keep you posted, chief, for I may need your aid."

"Well, Dick, success to you, say I, but what you are going to find out of this I cannot understand, and begin to think that the woman was guying me and it is all a fake."

"It may be; but one may find out that there is something in the charges that she makes."

The chief soon after took his departure, and Dick Doom retired for the night.

But he was up bright and early the next morning, and when Detective Gordon called, according to appointment, he again met, as he believed, Mrs. Richards.

"I am sorry you cannot see Mr. Richards, Detective Gordon, but he left these written instructions for you, and this roll of money, a hundred dollars."

"Your instructions will tell you just what to do, and as Mr. Richards has other detectives at work in this case, he gave me this half of a silver dollar for you, and says that you are to trust implicitly any one coming to you with this half I have here, and to obey them as well."

"See, it is cut in two so that the date of

issue is severed, the Eighteen being on this piece I keep, and the Sixty-one on the half you have."

Armed with his instructions, his money, and the half of the silver dollar, Gordon took his leave, and one hour after Dick Doom left the hotel and started for New Jersey.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE YOUNG ARTIST.

ENOCH MARSDEN had really been taught a lesson by the sacrifice which his daughter had made by marrying Hugh Huntington.

He felt that she did not love the man, that she had sacrificed herself wholly to save him, and that, in spite of her palatial home, her being a reigning queen of society and the luxury in which she lived, with every wish gratified, that she was not happy.

She was wont to visit him regularly once a week, and Mr. Marsden was invited on one Sunday of each month to dine at Surf Spray Hall.

He had sold out all the horses, except the farm animals and his own riding and driving animal, the vehicles not needed had also been disposed of, with other articles about the place that were useless, and he had banked the money, so that he was no longer in debt, as the farm paid him a fair income.

Seated one afternoon on his piazza, smoking his pipe, he saw a stranger come into the grounds.

He was a young man and walked with a quick step, while he carried an easel and portfolio strapped to his back.

He greeted Mr. Marsden pleasantly, asked for a glass of water, and was cordially received in return with the words:

"Sit down and rest, sir, and in half-an-hour dinner will be ready and I will be glad of your company."

"Thank you, sir," and thus urged the young man accepted, and opening his portfolio showed him some very handsome sketches he had.

"You are an artist above the average, if I am any judge, sir. Do you paint as well as draw?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and portrait painting is my choice, and I am in this part of the country hoping to get a chance to paint the portrait of the beautiful Mrs. Huntington, for that would make a name for me, as I would exhibit it in the New York Academy."

"But I do not know her, and fear when I go and ask her, she will refuse, or her husband will."

Dinner was then announced, and during the meal the young artist proved himself a most companionable guest.

As they passed out of the dining-room he beheld Myrtle's piano, for her father had kept it there to have her play for him when she visited him.

"Are you fond of music, sir?"

"Oh, yes, but since my daughter's marriage I hear but little."

"May I play for you, Mr. Marsden?"

"Gladly."

And the artist proved a master of the instrument and completely won Mr. Marsden by his music.

After a while he arose, and, going out upon the piazza, to take his departure, Enoch Marsden said:

"See here, Mr. Gus Thomas, I wish you to do something for me."

"Certainly, sir."

"I'll send you to the hotel in the village, get your traps and come here and spend a few weeks with me, for I wish you to paint my daughter's portrait for me, and I'll give you your price for it."

"But you said she was married, sir, and gone away."

"True, and she is the very one whose portrait you wished to paint, for my daughter, sir, is Mrs. Hugh Huntington."

"Can this be possible, sir?"

"It is, though let me tell you frankly that she is my step-daughter, my adopted daughter as well, for I married a widow with one child, Myrtle.

"My wife was drowned, and Myrtle has been my idol, and I wish you to paint her portrait, so I'll give you a letter to her tomorrow and you can go there each day for a sitting from her of an hour or two, and be my guest while you are engaged on the work."

"Oh, Mr. Marsden!

"If you will do this for me, I'll make no charge for the portrait, if you will only allow me to exhibit it."

"I'll not take your portrait without paying for it, Mr. Thomas; but you can exhibit it yes, for she is a beautiful woman, as you said."

Calling to his hired man to hitch the horse to the buggy, Enoch Marsden drove the young artist to the village, some miles distant, and got from the tavern his luggage, and took him back home with him.

That night the two sat up until a late hour, talking, and the artist found his host a very entertaining companion.

The next morning, armed with a letter of introduction to Myrtle, Mr. Gus Thomas, as he called himself, set out for Surf Spray in the Riverside Rest buggy, with high hope that his mission would be successful.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REBUFF.

WHEN Gus Thomas dismounted from the buggy at the front of Surf Spray Hall, he ascended the massive stone steps, ornamented upon either side with a huge bronze lion of heroic size, and glanced about him with admiration at the grandeur of the home.

So rapt was he in the scene that he did not hear a step behind him until a voice asked:

"Pardon me, but did you come to visit me, sir?"

"Ah! pardon me, sir, but I am an artist and I was enraptured at the beauty of your house and its surroundings, if, as I believe, you are Mr. Huntington?"

"I am Mr. Huntington, sir."

"I did not really call to see you, Mr. Huntington, for I have no acquaintance with you, but I am glad to first meet you, as I have a letter of introduction to your wife."

"To my wife?"

"Yes, sir. From her father, sir, Mr. Marsden."

"Umph! and your name?"

"Is Gus Thomas."

"Where is the letter?"

"Here, sir, and I would ask to send it with my card to Mrs. Huntington."

Hugh Huntington took the letter, but dropped the card as though purposely.

The envelope was unsealed, and he took the letter and read it.

"Well, sir, I'll tell my wife that you called, but I thought it not necessary to send her either the letter or your card."

Hugh Huntington stooped, picked up the card and glanced at it said gruffly:

"Gus Thomas? I never heard the name."

"It is wholly unknown to me."

"What, Mr. Huntington, the name of Gus Thomas, the artist, unknown to you?"

"Do you not know that I bought one of his paintings from Count Sado's sale?" and Myrtle swept out upon the piazza.

"Yes, I recall the name now, Mrs. Huntington, but this young man professes to be Gus Thomas, the artist?"

"Indeed! and why should he not be, for youth is no bar to genius."

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Thomas, and I certainly can congratulate you upon the very high character of work you have done."

"Bah! he is an itinerant painter, Myrtle, and brings this letter from your father, who wants him to paint your portrait."

Myrtle took the letter and an angry light flashed in her superb eyes, as she said:

"I supposed a letter bearing my name, Mr. Huntington, was sacred from even you."

"Mr. Thomas, my father's letter is all the passport you need to receive a cordial welcome from me, even did your name as an artist not gain it for you."

"I am glad that you called, sir, and I shall feel flattered at having a portrait from your brush."

"Walk in, Mr. Thomas, and we will talk it over, while I will show you the art gallery, where one of your own paintings can be found."

"Mr. Huntington, I hope you will come and see some of Mr. Thomas's work, for I observe he has his portfolio with him."

"Certainly, as Mr. Thomas really appears to be the one he represents himself, and I must crave pardon, as my life is made a burden, sir, by book-agents, lightning-rod men, missionaries, parsons, and I do not know how many frauds who positively haunt me even in this secluded spot."

"Say no more about it, Mr. Huntington, for I can readily understand the woes of a millionaire from those who seek him through a hundred different reasons," and the artist opened his portfolio and exhibited his drawings.

The artistic eye of Hugh Huntington at once recognized his talent, while an artist herself, Myrtle saw the skill of the master in what was shown her.

She then led him into the house, and he was delighted with what he beheld in the parlors and the art gallery, particularly praising the works signed simply "M. M."

"Who is M. M. may I ask?"

"My wife, sir, for her name was Myrtle Marsden," said Hugh Huntington with considerable pride.

The artist was kept to lunch at the mansion, and when he left, Hugh Huntington had engaged him to paint a second portrait of his wife, for his library, and one of himself also.

"Well, it's lucky for me my good friend Gus Thomas has been in Europe the past seven years, and that I have considerable talent myself as an artist, or I would have been in a tight place that time."

"But, as it is, I am solid now with Hugh Huntington, and now to solve the mystery that brought me here," and Dick Doom, alias Gus Thomas, drove on his way back to Riverside Rest.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PORTRAIT BEGUN.

THE sittings for the portrait of Myrtle Huntington began two days after Dick Doom's visit to Surf Spray, in the impersonation of an artist friend, who was making a name and fame in Europe.

The versatile detective took chances when he gave his card as Gus Thomas; but then he knew the young artist well in the past, that he was not unlike himself in appearance, about his age, and had started out in life from a plantation home in the far South, so, except by name, was known to but few persons.

So it was that he had decided to play the part of an artist, a character very easy for him to take, as he was in fact blessed with artistic talent far above the average.

The first request of the pretended Gus Thomas upon arriving at Surf Spray and which Hugh Huntington frankly told him, revealed the true artist instinct, was to ask Mrs. Huntington to show him her wardrobe.

It was a magnificent one, of course, and, a woman, she naturally exhibited it with real pleasure.

He selected several dresses from the lot and asked her to put them on, and several hours were consumed before he found one that

suited his fancy, and then, to the delight of both Mr. Huntington and his wife, he selected a riding habit and hat which certainly was more becoming than anything else she could wear.

Afterward the pose was taken and all made ready for work, when luncheon was announced by the butler.

Thus day after day passed, until two weeks had gone by, and on one stormy afternoon Dick Doom had been so cordially urged to remain all night and not return to Riverside Rest, that he had consented, with apparent reluctance, however, though it was just what he wished to do.

On the following Sunday he mounted Enoch Marsden's riding horse and rode over to the village.

During his stay at Riverside Rest he had completely won the heart of the lonely old gentleman, and his confidence as well, and the two would often sit up until midnight talking in a most confidential manner.

Whether Dick Doom told his own confidences correctly or not, he won the sympathy of Marsden, and one night the old gentleman unbosomed himself to the young detective, telling him of his own career.

Three times each week did the Artist Ferret go over to Surf Spray to paint on the portrait, for Myrtle could not spare him more time than a sitting every other day.

She saw that he was going to make her a beautiful portrait, and Hugh Huntington realized that fact as well, and he had become more and more interested in the young man in spite of himself.

"Somehow that fellow fascinates me," he said to his wife.

"I do not know what it is, I do not understand it, but I both like him and dislike him."

"If it were possible for me to fear any man I would believe that I dreaded him."

"Yet why?"

"That I do not know, unless it is his genius."

And the master of Surf Spray turned away, while Myrtle mused:

"Yes, and he has the same influence over me, though I would not confess it."

"I wonder what it is—I only wish that I knew, could fathom the feeling, but I cannot."

And so the sittings went on until the Sunday when Dick Doom rode over to the village.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A LEAF FROM THE PAST.

WHEN Dick Doom arrived at the village tavern he asked there for James Gordon, and was told that a man of that name had come there, some two weeks before, looking for work, and had gone out in search of it among the farms, leaving his grip at the tavern to be sent for, should he obtain employment.

"Has he sent for his grip?" asked Dick Doom.

"I really don't know, but I'll ask my stableman, for he had charge of it."

The stableman was sent for and reported that Gordon had sent for his grip the day after he left, for he had gotten a place.

"I hope nothing is wrong with him, sir, for he seemed such an honest, nice man."

"Oh, no, he is all right, only I knew him and thought I would come over and see him."

"Do you know where he got work?"

"Yes, sir, at Surf Spray Hall, sir, the elegant home of Mr. Huntington, twelve miles from here, for his man it was who stopped for his grip."

"Thank you. I am glad he is doing so well, for Gordon is a good fellow."

So Dick Doom returned to Riverside Rest very well pleased with the knowledge that Detective Gordon had also gotten a place at the very house they were shadowing.

"That Gordon is a good one," he muttered.

"Of course he does not know me as I know him, but I must find some way to communicate with him."

"Ah! I have it! Mr. Marsden has a very wild thoroughbred colt he wished me to ride, and he

"I will ride him on Tuesday to Surf Spray and will have to take him around to the stables myself, and mount him there as well, in leaving, so I'll get two chances of seeing Gordon."

"If I do, I can show him my half of that silver dollar, and hand him a slip of paper telling him where to meet me."

"With Gordon outside and I inside of the mansion, we certainly must discover the skeleton in the closet of Surf Spray Hall."

"That night Enoch Marsden and Dick Doom sat up, as was their wont, until a late hour talking in the library."

The two old servants whom Mr. Marsden kept about the house retired early to their room in the rear of the building, the stableman had his quarters outside, and all was quiet as the two sat chatting together, the master of Riverside Rest smoking his pipe.

Referring to what Dick Doom had told him of his own life, whether true or not, Mr. Marsden said, thoughtfully:

"Do you know, my young friend, I feel strangely drawn toward you, and I regard you as I would a son?"

"Thank you, sir."

"I went over Sunday, as you know, to Surf Spray, and saw your portrait of my child, as far as it is finished, and I am more than satisfied with it."

"I am glad that it pleases you, Mr. Marsden."

"It pleases Myrtle too, and also, strange to say, that hypocritical fellow, her husband, who is one of the strangest men I ever met."

"A good fellow, withal, although a man whom you can no more read than you can a Chinese poem."

"His wife does not know him yet, never sees behind the mask he wears, never sees his manner changed; there is no disturbing his cool, suave manner, his polite effrontery; in fact, he is absolutely an unreadable man."

"I have been mentally painting his portrait, sir, and I see him just as you describe him."

"Then I am right, for it is your profession to study human nature, to read faces."

"Yes, and I like it."

"I do not, for it is too great an effort; but I cannot help but study my lesson whenever I see Hugh Huntington."

"He is an enigma that I try in vain to solve."

"Is he a happy man, sir?" ventured Dick Doom.

"Happy or unhappy, who can tell?"

"He enjoys life, is generous to the poor, lavishes money upon his wife, treats her with marked respect, and yet both appear cynical toward each other."

"Is she happy, sir?"

"Yes, and no."

"But she is as happy as she will ever be."

"I'll tell you the story of her life and of Hugh Huntington's courtship, if you care to hear it."

"I would be glad to listen, Mr. Marsden, for I am most deeply interested in Mr. and Mrs. Huntington," was the answer.

And so the story was told of the rescue of Myrtle by Bert Manning, and of how her father felt confident that she had loved the preserver of her life and bitterly mourned his sad end.

Then came frankly the tale of his own extravagances, debts and being on the verge of ruin, when Hugh Huntington had offered him a way out of his troubles, and Myrtle had at once accepted the terms of the millionaire master of Surf Spray and become his wife.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE STORY OF A DUEL.

It was with the deepest interest that Dick Doom listened to the story of Myrtle's early love and her sacrifice, if it could be so-called, in becoming the wife of Hugh Huntington.

At last he asked:

"And who is Hugh Huntington, sir?"

"Well, the Huntingtons are a very old family, and Surf Spray was built over a hundred years ago and descended from father to son."

"Colonel Huntington, the owner before the present master, was a wild young army officer, and it was said got into several severe scrapes, but no one knew just what."

"He came home from the army, and settled there, having an only son, whom he kept under a tutor, then sent to a military academy, and next abroad, where he went to a university and became involved in a fatal duel, so came home again."

"His father, I have heard, forgetting scenes in his early life, or tortured by them, never for-

gave the son and exiled him from home, disinheriting him, it was said, until he came to die, when he changed his will, leaving him everything in case he came to receive it within a given time."

"And he never came?"

"There were several claimants appeared, but they were frauds, and Hugh Huntington, left sole executor, was to become the heir unless Hazel Huntington, the exiled son, appeared within the given time."

"Who was Hugh Huntington, sir?"

"The nephew of the colonel, and a poor bank clerk."

"He made a splendid manager, though, the property doubled under his care, and he did all in his power to find the heir, to his credit let me say it, though it would throw him out of a fortune himself."

"Why, he kept standing advertisements in the papers, and employed a New York detective by the year to look him up."

"And the son never turned up?"

"No."

"He has never been heard from?"

"Well, it was said that word came that he had been killed in a fight in a mining-camp."

"Out West?"

"Yes, in Arizona."

"That was why Hugh Huntington knew the claimants were frauds."

"Up to the time allotted, Huntington lived upon his salary, most economically, with only two old servants, Abram Clements and his wife, who had been witnesses to Colonel Huntington's will."

"But when the day came that made him master of Surf Spray, he launched out into a life of luxury, and has kept it up, though he lives within his income, and men say never makes a mistake in an investment, all he touches turning to gold, so that his estate increases largely all the while."

"Did you know young Huntington, sir?"

"Oh, yes, and he was a fine fellow."

"Why, let me tell you how he saved Myrtle's life one day?"

And Enoch Marsden told the story of Hazel Huntington's rescue of Myrtle the day her bridle-bit broke and her horse was dashing with her to certain death among the vehicles that crowded the drive along the sea avenue at the summer resort.

"He was a fellow of nerve," said Dick Doom.

"Indeed he was, and it was from a young man who attended the same university abroad that I heard the story of his duel there, and he showed great nerve in that."

"I should like to hear the story, sir, if you will tell it to me?"

"Certainly, for at times I like to look back and recall the past."

"It seems that a young man at the university, also an American, was prone to pick upon Hazel Huntington for some reason."

"They were rivals in their studies and in athletic sports, and the other was angry when defeated by his younger comrade, and for that reason was severe in his remarks about him, until one day he went too far in a remark he made to Hazel, and was knocked down promptly for it."

"Through some influence brought to bear against him Hazel was dismissed from the university, and meeting his rival, he was taunted with it, and again a blow followed."

"This time his rival challenged him to a duel, for there was no alternative, he being no longer able to escape as a senior student not being allowed to fight a junior, as in the first case."

"The duel followed, and Hazel disarmed his enemy and gave him his life; but the other was a dead-shot with a pistol, and forced another meeting, and he fell dead at the first fire, young Huntington being slightly wounded."

"Then he returned home and his father made life a misery to him, until at last he left home and went, with Bert Manning as his comrade, to the mines of Arizona, where both lost their lives."

"And who was Bert Manning, sir?"

"I will tell you just who Bert Manning was," said Mr. Marsden, in a low, earnest tone.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SECRET MADE KNOWN.

THERE was a silence of several minutes after Enoch Marsden said that he would tell who Bert Manning was; but Dick Doom was as patient as an Indian, and waited, with no show of anxiety.

He had heard the story of Hugh Huntington, and of the colonel and his son. He had also

heard of Myrtle's romance and strange marriage.

Now he was to hear of Bert Manning, another one indirectly connected with the family.

Knowing all, he then might be able to gather up the threads and form a theory of his own.

At last the old man said:

"You see, my young friend, as I said, I feel a fatherly interest in you, and in telling you the story of Bert Manning's life, I must unfold my own history."

"Do not do so, sir, if it is painful to you."

"Oh, no, it is not painful, now. Time has healed all wounds, and even my neighbors know not the real truth of the story of my life."

"I appreciate your confidence, sir."

"I inherited my property here, and some money besides, and I did not think of marrying until I had sown my wild oats, though I now know that I kept a large crop for sowing after I got old enough to know better, as witness my extravagances which led to my daughter marrying Hugh Huntington."

"You are living quiet enough now, sir."

"Oh, yes. I am wiser now, and it is time, for I am verging on sixty years."

"I went South on a visit, Mr. Thomas, and there I met a young woman in whom I became deeply interested."

"I knew her father, and met her at his home just at a time when he became financially embarrassed."

"I helped him out a little, but, poor fellow, he could not stand the pressure and broke down and died under it."

"In his illness I met daily his daughter, and she was a widow, her husband having been lost at sea, I was told, a year before."

"She had one son, a bright little boy, and we became devoted friends."

"As my friend left me to settle up his affairs, I remained to do so, and found that, after repaying myself the loans I had made him, his daughter would have barely a thousand dollars, for her husband had left her nothing."

"I then boldly asked her to become my wife, she accepted me and we were married."

"I brought her home with me here, and we were happy."

"But one day a shock came, for a letter came from a foreign land—I have that letter now."

"It was mailed in China, and the signature was that of Bert Manning."

"It told of the shipwreck of his vessel, the drifting of the wreck at sea until it went ashore upon an island, and how over two years passed before he, and the few of the crew with him, were rescued."

"A ship, bound to China, blown out of her way in a hurricane, landed there for water, and they were saved."

"They went in the vessel to China, though, caught in another storm, the ship had been dismantled and worked the rest of her voyage under jury-masts."

"He had gotten command of a vessel there, which was to sail for America via the Cape of Good Hope, so that it would be a long time yet before he arrived home."

"It was a bitter blow to me, and to her, for I loved her dearly, and she had married her first husband to please her father, though he was a fine fellow."

"Of course we parted by mutual consent, got a decree of divorce in the courts, and, just like the scandal-mongers, the blame they laid upon the unfortunate woman."

"Neither of us would tell the true story, and I bought a little home for her and her son, Bert Manning, down at the Highlands of Neversink, and there they went to live and await the return home of Captain Manning, when she would confess all to him."

"And he returned at last?"

"Yes, he returned, and he forgave her readily under the circumstances, and I secured him a lucrative position in a firm, which, however, afterward failed. I never met him, however."

"And his son?"

"Oh, he grew up to be a bright fellow, and, as I said, saved Myrtle's life, and often met her afterward at the balls and entertainments."

"When his father lost his place, he started out with Hazel Huntington, whom he had gone to the academy with, and they both lost their lives in the Arizona mines, poor Bert dying of consumption there."

"And his parents?"

"His father broke down in health and died of consumption a year ago, while Myrtle, who knows all of his wife's history, gave her a place with her at Surf Spray, as half maid,

half companion, and is very devoted to her indeed, for Mrs. Manning is a true and lovely woman, Mr. Thomas."

"I have no doubt of it, sir, and has had much sorrow in her life certainly."

"Yes, she has, indeed, had her sorrows; but I hope some day all will be brighter for her."

"She is a widow, sir, and you a widower, and you know her worth, so—"

Enoch Marsden sprang to his feet with a cry that startled Dick Doom, while he added:

"See here, my boy, you have shown me my duty—I shall marry her—again."

CHAPTER XXVII.

DICK DOOM'S MISSION.

WHEN he went to Surf Spray the following Tuesday, Dick Doom rode, what the stableman at Riverside Rest not inappropriately named "The Devil Colt."

He worked the colt up into an ugly humor as he neared the mansion, and, as he dashed up, called to Hugh Huntington that he would ride the animal to the stables himself, as he was not safe to be handled.

Hugh Huntington looked up from his paper, as he sat upon the piazza, and said to his wife, who was walking to and fro near him:

"That is a devilish beast, and Thomas rides him splendidly."

"Yes, Mr. Thomas appears to be a very accomplished gentleman indeed, for he is an artist, a musician, sings well, talks well, and is an athlete, while we have discovered that he rides like an Indian."

"He is a dangerous man for a young girl to meet."

"Perhaps, for those who are not young girls?"

"Yes, for any woman who would wish to be a fool and wreck her life," was the retort.

In the mean while, Dick Doom—*alias* Thomas—had kept on to the stables.

As he approached, one of the stablemen came to meet him.

He dismounted quickly and said:

"You will find him an ugly creature, my man."

"I will come out here and mount him when I leave, and here is for your trouble. Be sure that you have my horse ready for me when I want him."

He slipped into the man's hand as he spoke a piece of closely-folded paper, and the piece of the dollar of which he had given Gordon the other half.

He saw the man start and look fixedly at him, but the stableman replied, quickly:

"I'll look after him, sir, and have him ready for you when you want him, if it is not after four o'clock, for I ride up to the post-office for the mail then, sir."

"I shall come for him at just half-past three, my man."

Dick Doom turned away and soon after joined Hugh Huntington upon the piazza.

"You ride splendidly, Thomas, and that was the devil's own you strode to-day."

"Yes, sir; they call him the Devil's Colt at Riverside. I told Mr. Marsden I would break him in for him, sir."

"Take care he does not break your neck."

"I shall try not to lose my life, sir."

"I suppose Mrs. Huntington is in the gallery, sir?"

"Yes; walk in."

And the master of Surf Spray continued reading his paper.

In the art gallery in the rear annex of the mansion, the detective found Myrtle arrayed in her riding-habit.

She greeted him pleasantly, complimented him upon his riding, and took her stand for her portrait.

"Mrs. Huntington, I have a commission to perform this morning from your father," said Dick Doom, as he went on mixing his paints.

"Ah! and what is it, Mr. Thomas?"

"Your father and I have become real chums, and we have long talks together every night."

"I am glad he has such pleasant companionship."

"Thanks!" and he bowed his graceful acknowledgment.

"Of course I have sketched my humble career to him, and he has, in turn, unasked, I assure you, told me much of his life."

"I feel that his confidence has not been misplaced, Mr. Thomas."

"I trust not, madam."

"Telling me of his unfortunate and unhappy alliance to Mrs. Manning, when her husband was believed to be dead, he also made known that she had met with deep afflictions."

"Yes; in the death of her husband and son. That cast a gloom over her life."

"I can feel that it is so; but he told me also, how you had made her your companion and maid."

"I knew her need, and, as she would accept no aid from my father I offered her the position of companion."

"She said that it was a position I had made for her, and she would accept it only on the condition that she should serve me as my maid, also."

"I consented, and my first misunderstanding with my husband was when I discharged the maid whose services he had secured for me."

"I was firm, however, for I soon got the other woman a place, and Mrs. Manning is invaluable in every way to me, for while she is a companion and friend she will persist in serving me in a menial capacity."

"She is a refined woman, educated, and very handsome, for she is just forty—in fact, is like a dear, good mother to me."

"I am glad to hear this, Mrs. Huntington, as I know the contents of two letters that I bear," and Dick Doom took from his pocket two letters and said:

"I am told to ask you to read them both."

One was addressed to Myrtle, and unsealed.

What she read was as follows:

"Last night, my dear daughter, my young chum Thomas and I had a long, confidential chat, as is our wont, and I told him the story of my first marriage, and its unhappy termination."

"Do you know that to make all things even, to bring greater comfort and happiness to her declining years, it had never occurred to me to right an unintentional wrong by asking Mrs. Manning to again become my wife?"

"The thought was suggested by my young friend, and hence I immediately write you."

"She has saved up money enough to live upon for a few months in New York, and she can go there and dwell until I go after her to bring her back with me to Riverside Rest as my wife."

"But, dear, if you think this should not be, tell me so frankly, for I wish to do nothing to bring your censure upon me."

"If it meets with favor in your eyes, then discharge that sweet companion of yours from your service, as soon as you have given her the accompanying letter, and all will be well."

"I leave all in your hands to negotiate."

"Well, this letter gives me real joy, for nothing would I seek more than the happiness of Mrs. Manning and my father. I very well know that she is greatly devoted to him, and that he is the same to her."

"I am not Mr. Marsden's own child, as I believe you know, Mr. Thomas, but he is just as dear to me as my own father, for he has been devoted to me since the death of my revered mother, who was drowned, at which time he saved my life after a hard fight against death to do so."

"It is a pleasant mission you come on, to-day. I will at once seek Mrs. Marsden, so you can carry back her answer and mine to dear old papa."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE APPOINTMENT.

DICK DOOM painted away at the portrait, with a smile upon his fine face, during the absence of Mrs. Huntington.

He felt that he had performed a good deed, and hoped that all would come well for both Mr. Marsden and Mrs. Marsden, for he had begun to feel a very sincere attachment for the master of Riverside Rest.

Soon the door opened and in came Mrs. Huntington, but not alone.

She was accompanied by a handsome lady, with slender, graceful form, who scarcely looked over thirty.

She wore a becoming white lace cap and apron but was dressed in black.

"Mr. Thomas, I wish you to meet one who has been like a mother to me—Mrs. Manning."

The Artist Detective arose quickly and grasped the hand extended to him, while Mrs. Manning said, her voice quivering with emotion:

"Mr. Thomas, let me thank you, sir, for your interest in me, and also to say that I have been discharged from my place here, at Surf Spray, and shall go to New York to-morrow, for I intend to do just as Mr. Marsden and Myrtle wish me to do, so you may tell him, from me."

"I congratulate you upon your decision, Mrs. Manning, for it will be far better for all concerned," assured the artist.

After a few minutes of conversation the now happy lady took her departure, to make her preparations for leaving, while "Mr. Thomas" went on with his work.

The master of Surf Spray seemed very genial at luncheon, and when told by his wife afterward, just what had occurred to cause Mrs. Manning's departure, he said:

"I never just understood the facts before, of that divorce, but it was all right, and your father will do well to marry again."

"It will be rather hard to entertain at my table, one who has been my wife's servant, yet I will consider her as your father's wife, you know."

"Yes, I am glad the matter is settled that she leaves. I will give her a check for her services, for I do not believe she has drawn a dollar of her wages while she has been here."

"Not a dollar?" coldly asked Myrtle.

"What are you paying her?"

"Thirty-five dollars a month."

"So much, eh?"

"Yes, little enough for her services."

"Well, she has been with you now eight months, so I'll write her a check for two hundred and eighty dollars," which Hugh Huntington did, at once.

It was just half-past three o'clock when the Detective Artist went to the stables to mount his horse. Both Mr. Huntington and Myrtle were on the piazza to see him go by.

Gordon led the horse out. The spirited creature was in prime condition, sleek and "full of the devil," as Mr. Huntington declared.

"He's all right, sir," said Gordon, and slyly slipped into the hand of "Mr. Thomas" the half of the dollar and a piece of paper.

"Thank you! Let him go!"

With a leap the detective was in the saddle, when the animal instantly bounded high in the air.

But he did not unseat his skillful rider, and went with mighty leaps up the avenue and along the grand drive around the house.

Dick Doom raised his hat politely as he went by the mansion, while Mrs. Huntington called out:

"Do be careful, Mr. Thomas!"

"Have a care, Thomas, or that ugly brute will kill you," added Hugh Huntington, warningly.

"You are not half so ugly as I make you, are you, old fellow?" muttered the masquerading detective, as the horse swept out past the porter's lodge into the highway.

When out of sight of the mansion, the detective began to calmly master the animal he rode.

"You served my purpose well, good horse, for you got me into the stable, and now you must behave yourself."

"Come, no more nonsense, for I wish you to be on your good behavior, now."

The horse soon cooled down, and in another mile was going quietly along.

He had had a fight for mastery, when forced to it, he had served a purpose, and was now content to be docile to his master rider.

Riding into a clump of woods, Dick Doom dismounted, let the animal crop grass, and took out the slip of paper handed to him by the watchful Gordon in his disguise as a stableman.

It read simply:

"Wait for me in the Picnic Grove on the way to the post-office."

"This is the very place I am to wait for him, for I have heard this called the Picnic Grove."

"Yes, there he comes now."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MEETING.

THE detective beheld as he spoke a horseman coming along the highway.

He knew that Mr. Huntington was wont to send night and morning for his mail to the little village post-office five miles from Surf Spray.

At last Gordon came along and dismounting said:

"You handed me, sir, a token that proves you are in the same line that I am."

"Yes, you are Gordon, the detective?"

"I am, sir."

"Engaged at Surf Spray in the character of a stableman, and at the same time shadowing the inmates?"

"Yes, sir."

"You met Mrs. Richards at the hotel in New York?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am Mr. Richards."

"Why, they said you were the artist painting Mrs. Huntington's portrait?"

"I am; but I am playing the character of an artist friend, to carry out my work, for I too am shadowing Surf Spray Hall."

"You are doing it well, sir."

"Permit me to return the compliment, Mr. Gordon; but then, you are well aware that the slightest mistake may ruin all?"

"Indeed it may, sir."

"I went to the village inn to find you, but heard you had gotten a place here."

"Now tell me if you have brought the shadow of a suspicion upon yourself?"

"Not the slightest, sir, and I can vouch for it that you have not."

"Well, what have you discovered?"

"I'll tell you, sir. I have noticed that the two upper servants, not referring to Mrs. Huntington's maid, are Mr. Huntington's firm friends."

"They are the butler, Clements, and his wife, Clara."

"Well?"

"You may not know that he has his rooms in one wing, and his wife in another, and every night Mrs. Clements prepares a late supper for the master, the cook not being called upon to do so. This he takes after eleven or twelve o'clock, and both the man and his wife wait upon him."

"I discovered that he ate a supper the night I remained at the mansion, but is it a nightly occurrence?"

"It is every night, sir, and he eats heartily, for I have seen the dishes the following morning."

"Whatever orders the madam gives go at once to the master before being obeyed."

"Clements and his wife alone have rooms in the mansion, excepting Mrs. Manning, and they live right over the rooms of Mr. Huntington."

"Yes."

"The house is a very large one, sir, and the servants say the upper wing and third floor are haunted, so they give it a wide berth."

"Yes. Have they seen any signs of ghostly occupants there, Mr. Gordon?"

"They have, sir, and though I am not at all superstitious, while watching one night, I saw and heard what I could not account for in any way."

"What was it?"

"A weird light in the upper story, sir, and it was flashing out upon the tree-tops."

"I went some distance off, and I distinctly saw a form pass one of the arched windows, sir."

"I went up to a tree near the house, climbed to the top, and I heard voices distinctly. They came from the upper floor."

"It was raining hard, and the tree became so slippery I could not remain in my position; but I heard and saw just what I have said."

"It is so, Gordon, for I went about that house like a ghost myself, the night I remained there—that is, everywhere I could go. I discovered the master's late supper, that some one was keeping him company, and I heard voices seemingly from above me, when I leaned out of my room and saw a light glimmer upon the tree-tops, and yet Mrs. Huntington told me that that part of the mansion held no occupant and was locked up securely."

"Returning to my room, I heard the rustle of a dress and shrunk into a niche in the stairway when some one passed me."

"All was dark, but soon a door opened; there was a light in the room, and I recognized Mrs. Manning as she entered."

"She had certainly been up to the unoccupied premises."

"Yes, sir; and I have seen her prowling about the grounds after midnight."

"What do the servants say of the place?"

"Well, sir, they do not talk, for fear of losing their sits; but they say the place is haunted, and there is some mystery about it they cannot understand, while Abram Clements and his wife are always watching them."

"Well, Gordon, keep your place where you are, and you shall be well repaid for it."

"Yes, sir."

"If you need to communicate with me, send a line to Gus Thomas at Riverside Rest, or come yourself."

"It may be that I shall take a run off for a few days, perhaps a couple of weeks, but I shall return and finish that portrait, and I wish you to keep on just as you are."

"There is something wrong about Surf Spray Hall, and we will yet ferret it out. I am beginning to see a little sunlight ahead."

"Now, I must go on my way, for it would not do to be seen talking to you."

Dick Doom mounted and went on to River-

side Rest, while Gordon turned off toward the village post-office a short distance beyond the woods.

CHAPTER XXX.

BETRAYED BY A RING.

WHEN Mrs. Manning took the boat at Sandy Hook, the next day, for New York, a pleasant voice said by her side:

"Let me carry your sachel, Mrs. Manning."

"Ah! Mr. Thomas! Thank you!"

The boat was not crowded, and he found seats for themselves some distance apart from every one else.

After a few words of casual conversation between them, Dick Doom remarked:

"I hope you will not think it idle curiosity on my part, Mrs. Manning, but what it really is, interest, if I ask you a few questions about your son, of whom I have often heard through an intimate friend of mine."

"Ah, Mr. Thomas, I am glad to talk of my dear boy, for, poor fellow, he met a sad fate, dying of a lingering disease out in the wilds of Arizona, with only his devoted friend near, Hazel Huntington."

"He went out there hoping to get a fortune in the mines, but was taken ill and never returned," and her eyes filled with tears.

"Who wrote you of his death, Mrs. Manning?"

"He wrote me until a few days before his death, and told me of Hazel's devotion to him."

"And then?"

"Some time after I got a letter from a man signing himself Saul Sanford, who told me he was a miner, and that Hazel Huntington had been killed in a fight in the mines; and so this miner sent me his things, with those of my son."

"The belongings of Hazel I sent to Mr. Hugh Huntington, with the letter from Saul Sanford, and soon after it was that Myrtle married the master of Surf Spray."

"Have you the address of this Saul Sanford, Mrs. Manning?"

"Yes; I kept it, but though I wrote him several times I never had any reply."

"I would like to get the address, Mrs. Manning, if you will give it me, and I would like to have yours, also."

"Certainly, sir," and both were given, and upon the boat landing at the pier Dick Doom drove Mrs. Manning to the place where she expected to make her home in the city.

From there he went down to see the chief of police, and was promptly admitted when he sent in the name of Richards.

"Ah, Dick, delighted to see you. What news do you bring?"

"Chief, I wish to ask you if you did not tell me that the unknown lady who called upon you in regard to the mystery at Surf Spray Hall wore a very peculiar ring that attracted your attention?"

"Yes, it was composed of a gold band, with two silver snakes entwined, their heads raised, and enameled eyes in one, ruby eyes in the other, while on the tops of their heads a large diamond was inset. I noted this ring carefully."

"Thank you. And the size of the lady?"

"Medium size, slender, and with a very sweet, low voice."

"She was dressed in black?"

"Yes, and wore a cloak with army cords across it in loops."

"I know the lady."

"Ah!"

"Yes, sir; but I have nothing to communicate yet."

"Now let me ask you if you did not once send out on service a man by the name of Saul Sanford?"

"Yes; but that was some years ago."

"Where is he now?"

"I discharged him from the force a year ago, for he got to be a worthless fellow and would not work. I think he took to gambling, for he always had money."

"Could you find him for me?"

"Oh, yes, readily enough."

"Please do so as soon as possible."

The chief touched a bell, and an officer was sent out in search of the man, Saul Sanford.

"Now, chief, was that man ever in the West?"

"I believe he was, for he was on special duty for several years, I remember, but I do not recall for whom, or on what service he was engaged."

"But he went West?"

"Yes. I know that he was gone for months

once, but he did not have to report to me, so I thought little of what he was about."

"He was paid for his services?"

"Oh, yes; the force was, but I believe he never accomplished the work he was sent to do."

"Now, chief, please keep the man Sanford here for me, and I'll return before long."

And Dick Doom left the office, while the chief muttered:

"Doom is hot on some trail now, that is certain."

Taking a carriage upon leaving Headquarters, Dick Doom drove to the address given him by Mrs. Manning, and which was not very far away.

Mrs. Manning was surprised to see the artist so soon again, but he said quickly:

"Mrs. Manning, you told me you got that miner's letter back from Mr. Huntington?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have it?"

"Yes; it is up-stairs in one of my trunks, for I left my baggage here when I went to Surf Spray."

"Will you trust it to me?"

"Certainly. I will get it for you," and in a short while she returned with the letter, which Dick Doom at once placed in his pocket.

"Now, Mrs. Manning, I wish to ask you why you called upon the Chief of the Secret Service to ask him to shadow with detectives Surf Spray Hall?"

"Oh, Mr. Thomas! How did you discover me?"

"By your ring and your handwriting. I feel as you do, that there is some mystery about Surf Spray Hall, and I wish you to give me your full confidence in this matter."

"I will tell you all that I know, sir, and that is but little; but I have heard and seen things in Surf Spray Hall which convinced me that some one dwells there unknown to poor Myrtle. I was in hopes that the secret could be found out, for her sake, for she suspects nothing."

"I thank you, Mrs. Manning, and I will promise you to solve the mystery, only do not allow any one to know that I saw you to-day, or that you told me anything of the secret of that house."

"I will not, sir."

And they parted, Dick Doom returning to the headquarters of the chief.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BETRAYED BY A LETTER.

WHEN Dick Doom returned to the chief's quarters the latter said:

"Well, Dick, your man is here."

"Thank you, sir, and here is the ring you spoke of. I have just left the lady who called upon you and she loaned it to me."

"You are a detective wonder, Dick!"

"Now, sir, send for my man, and do not be surprised at what happens."

The man came in, a dark-faced, sunken-eyed fellow, with stout form and an expression by no means prepossessing.

"Sanford, this gentleman wishes to see you."

"Yes, sir."

"You were once a detective, Mr. Sanford?" queried Dick, pleasantly.

"Yes, sir."

"Now I wish your aid, and I know you can help me; but first, let me know if you can get any one to help you, for I wish men not really engaged upon the force."

"Yes, sir, if there is money in it."

"Oh yes; you'll get your reward, I assure you; so write a note to your friend and the chief will send it to him, for I must not delay."

"Sit here, Sanford," and the chief gave him his desk.

A note was hastily written, and Dick Doom said:

"I'll dispatch it at once, chief, and give the bearer an extra fee to hurry."

He left the room, glanced at the letter outside, and then put it in his pocket.

Then he returned to the room, and said as he entered:

"You know, Sanford, I wish some service which I dare not ask the chief here to do for me; so Mr. Hugh Huntington gave me your address as a man I could rely upon for some shady transactions—never mind the chief, and don't turn pale or be troubled, for the chief is in this with me, though it must not be known."

"Yes, sir," said the man, whom the chief also had noticed had turned pale and trembled at the name of the master of Surf Spray.

"Now, Sanford, I wish to ask you frankly, how much Hugh Huntington paid you to kill Hazel Huntington?"

A startled cry broke from the lips of Sanford, and his face became livid.

His hand half dropped upon his side, but Dick Doom said quickly:

"You are covered, so take away your hand!"

The man glanced anxiously around the room and obeyed.

"See here! I know your whole game, and have the cards to trump it, so you might as well turn state's evidence and save your own neck."

"Oh, sir, I—"

"Chief, this man wrote a note just now, which please compare with this letter written from a mining-camp in Arizona."

"The writing is the same."

"And the name, as well as the signature. Sanford, you were a fool, for you signed your own name to this letter from the mines."

"Now tell me of the death of Hazel Huntington at your hands."

"I'll tell you all, sir, if you will save my life and not let me hang."

"The chief will promise you clemency if you confess the truth, and I will be the judge as to whether you speak falsely or not."

"I'll tell all, sir!" tremblingly.

"As a detective you were engaged by Hugh Huntington?"

"Yes, sir."

"To hunt for the exiled heir of Surf Spray?"

"I was, sir."

"He read your nature, knew your caliber, and so paid you to find him and get rid of him?"

"Yes, sir."

"I knew as much. And you at last found the heir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"I tracked him and his pard into Arizona, and I got to their cabin in a canyon just as Hazel Huntington was digging a grave."

"Well?"

"You'll save me, sir?"

"Yes, if you make a clean breast of it."

"I took aim with my rifle, sir, and killed him."

"You killed him?"

"Yes, sir, and he fell into the grave he had dug. I dared not go near him, but went to the cabin and found his pard there dead. He had died of consumption, for he was but skin and bones."

"I got their traps, sir, and left, and when I returned to the mining-camps I sent the things East to Mrs. Manning, the mother of young Huntington's pard, and wrote her that the latter had been killed in a fight."

"And then?"

"I came back, sir, and Hugh Huntington paid me the money agreed upon."

"How much?"

"Twenty thousand dollars, sir."

"And then?"

"I knew Luke Clements, a wild fellow, who was the son of the old man and woman in the employ of Mr. Huntington, and he told me that his father and mother had plotted with him to pretend to be the exiled heir, as he looked something like him, and he was to go and play it upon the executor."

"And he did so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well?"

"They told me that Mr. Huntington bought him off with big money, and he was so wicked he would not share it with them, but ran away with it that night, and no one has ever heard of him since."

"Huntington paid him how much?"

"A hundred thousand they said, in ten checks."

"There is more to tell?"

"They told—"

"Who are 'they'?"

"Abram Clements and his wife, sir."

"Well?"

"That another claimant came the very next night, but that Mr. Huntington also bought him off, for they never heard of him again."

"Do you know the banks Mr. Huntington deposits in?"

"Yes, sir; some of them."

"Write them down."

Saul Sanford did so.

"Now, Sanford, you must go to jail for the present, but do not say why to any one, or it will go hard with you."

"What was the date that young Clements got those checks?"

Sanford gave the date by reference to a notebook he had.

Then Dick Doom told the chief to have the

man cared for, and then, for a long time, the two officers were in conference over the remarkable case which the great detective had so cleverly unearthed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RUN DOWN.

A NOTE from Dick Doom to Mrs. Huntington explained that he could not keep his engagement for the next day, but upon the following morning he drove over to Surf Spray, although it was dismal and threatening rain.

He explained that he had been called over to Philadelphia the day before, but would paint a longer while to make up for the time lost.

The portrait, he said, he could finish by night, and was anxious to do so.

As the rain soon began to fall in torrents, he was told that he must remain all night. He decided to do so, and went out to the stable to send his team back to Riverside Rest, for he had brought a driver with him that morning.

"Ask Mr. Marsden to come over here early in the morning," were his orders to the driver, and then to Gordon he whispered:

"Be on the piazza to-night, near the front door, after ten o'clock."

The portrait was finished, and both Mr. Huntington and Myrtle were delighted with it.

All were in particularly pleasant humor at dinner, and afterward had some music, Dick Doom and Myrtle singing duets together which the master of Surf Spray seemed greatly to enjoy.

At last good-night was said, and Dick Doom retired to his room.

Half an hour after he left it, crept to the front door, and let Gordon in.

"Now wait here until I call," he ordered, stopping at the door leading into the master's rooms.

He knocked, and there was heard some disturbance within.

"Who is there?"

"Mr. Huntington, it is I, Gus Thomas. I wish to speak with you."

In a moment the door opened and Huntington asked:

"Anything wrong, Mr. Thomas?"

"Yes, sir; there is much that is wrong, for you are my prisoner for murders committed; you are master of Surf Spray Hall no more," covering Huntington with a revolver.

The man started back, uttered a cry, pressed his hand hard upon his heart, reeled and fell upon a lounge.

A signal brought Gordon into the room.

"Gordon, he is dying, for the shock of the discovery of his infamous crimes has killed him."

"You leave, as you came in, waiting outside, and I will ring for Clements and his wife."

The two servants soon appeared, when the Artist Detective said:

"Your master has had an attack of heart trouble; aid me to revive him—ah! too late; he is dead."

They stood aghast, and then "Mr. Thomas" revealed the true situation.

"I have this to say to you two—that I know your plot, with your son and Sanford, to defraud Huntington."

"You believed that your son ran off with that money, but he did not. He never drew a dollar of it. This man here killed him and tossed the body into the sea."

"Nay, hear me, for it will go better with you to do so."

"The real heir Saul Sanford shot to kill, but did not kill, for Hazel was only slightly wounded—really was merely stunned by the bullet, and, burying his friend, he worked on in the pocket or lode unearthed at his friend's grave and made a fortune there."

"He came home, not knowing his father was dead, and Hugh Huntington, the infamous scoundrel, sought to kill him by a blow on the head. The blow did not kill, however, but had the effect to unseat his mind. The villain then decided to hide Hazel in this house, where he had a prison made for him, and has since then kept him in this prison room, you two aiding him by cooking the poor fellow's meals."

"I came here last night secretly, climbed the lightning-rod on the rear, walked along the roof in rubbers, and reached that prison, talking to him through the iron bars."

"I now wish to tell you, that, as Mr. Huntington is dead, and of heart disease, I know all. But I will have no scandal fall upon Mrs. Huntington; so you two confederates can be safe only by keeping this secret."

"To-morrow you will give your mistress notice that you intend to leave."

"To-night I will lead poor Hazel Huntington

from this house. There is a carriage awaiting him out on the highway."

"In a short while he can return to his home here, as though he had just come from the West. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and thank you," both cried, thoroughly crushed, shocked and terrified.

"Now, I will go up and lead young Mr. Huntington here. You await my coming."

He went up through the rooms of Hugh Huntington to the prison above, and soon returned with the prisoner, now pale and thin from his long confinement.

"He cheated the gallows, but it is better so for the sake of all concerned."

"Come! My man waits outside with overcoat and hat, and will go with you to the carriage in waiting," and with a glance at the dead form of his wicked and treacherous cousin, Hazel Huntington passed through the room, old Abram and Clara shrinking from his sight, with abject terror.

In a few moments, the Artist Detective no longer, but now Dick Doom in his true character, came back into the room.

"Now, Clara, go and awaken Mrs. Huntington," he ordered. "Do not alarm her more than to say the master has been taken suddenly ill, and that Mr. Gus Thomas is with him."

"You, Abram, go and send a man with all haste after the doctor."

In a short while Clara returned with Myrtle, and Dick Doom met her at the door.

"Be calm and brave, Mrs. Huntington, for your husband is dead," he said, in a sympathetic tone.

She started, turned pale, and passed into the room and bent over him.

"Come with me, for I have something to tell you. I have sent for your father, and Mrs. Manning also will be here by the early train."

"Are you ready to listen to me?" he asked, as he led her into the parlor, while Abram and Clara remained with the body.

"Yes, and I know that you have something awful to tell."

"Let me first say that I am not Gus Thomas, the artist, but a detective. I have been shadowing Surf Spray Hall ever since you first met me."

"Now to my story."

And it was all told from beginning to end. Then Myrtle felt that in Dick Doom she had a friend as dear to her in her distress as a brother could have been.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE body of Hugh Huntington was buried with honor, his dark life's secret being kept safely hidden from the world.

Saul Sanford was set free, and Abram and Clara were allowed to go their way, unpunished.

The real heir to Surf Spray came, after a month, to visit Myrtle. They talked over the past and she offered to yield her rights at once—wished to do so as all the reparation she could make for her dishonored husband's great crime; but Hazel said no—that she must share all with him some day in the future, for he had always loved her.

Be it said that she, too, confessed that it had not been Bert Manning who held her heart; Hazel had that.

Mrs. Manning remained at Surf Spray with Myrtle, and in looking over some papers one day, with her, came across an old diary of Colonel Huntington that told the secret of his own life.

It revealed that he had secretly married against his parents' will—that his wife had left him a son, and he never let it be known, but raised the boy far off from home.

Marrying again, Hazel was born, when a strange fatality had induced Colonel Huntington to send the two half-brothers to the same university, the first-born bearing his mother's name; and he it was whom the young heir to Surf Spray had killed in a duel!

"This secret must be kept from Hazel," said Myrtle; and so it is not known to him to this day.

Mr. Marsden and Mrs. Manning were married six months after Hugh Huntington's death, and the year following Myrtle became Mrs. Hazel Huntington.

It was the "Artist Detective," Dick Doom of the Golden Fetters, who gave the bride away!

THE END.

1038 KANSAS KING; or, The Red Right Hand. By Buffalo Bill.